

VOLUME 20
NUMBER 5

AMAZING STORIES

AUGUST
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by RICHARD S. SHAYER

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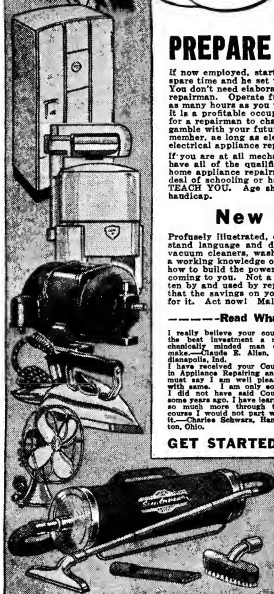
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The Limping Hag, having been beaten on Venus, fled to Earth to set up her empire on the sea bottom.

MARCH OF THE MERCURY MEN

(Novelet—19,000) By Don Wilcox 46

Illustrated by Nad Hedley

Death and destruction loomed as the Mercury Men set out on their monstrous steeds to do battle . . .

THE GIFT

(Novelet—12,300) By Berkeley Livingston 82

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Precious indeed was the gift from the world's greatest artist—but a curse went with its misuse.

SOME ARE NOT MEN

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Illustrated by Arnold Kohn

You see them on the street every day, but do not recognize them—these creatures who are not men.

BOTHON

(Novelet—12,000) By Henry S. Whitehead 122

Illustrated by James B. Settles

Of what importance was one wronged man in a world rent apart by the dying convulsion of a continent?

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Front cover painting by H. W. McCauley featuring the "Mac Girl" in "The Sea People"

Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul illustrating "Stories Of The Stars"

AMAZING
STORIES

★
AUGUST
1946

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Volume 20
Number 5

The

OBSERVATORY

..... by the Editor

THE feature story for this month is a sequel to "Cult of the Witch Queen" which ran in our July issue. "The Sea People" continues the adventures of Richard S. Shaver's latest fictional hero among the strange peoples whose possible power to interfere with our surface life has been so graphically illustrated by over 10,000 confirming letters from our readers. In this new story, all of which Mr. Shaver insists is truth, or based on true conditions as yet beyond the ken of ordinary men, you will again meet the Limping Hag, that monster woman of two worlds who lives on blood transfused from the veins of "slave" children. Those of you who have read AMAZING STORIES for many years will recall a story by Kathleen Ludwick called "Draught of Immortality" printed in one of those early issues which was based on a factual story in which just such a thing was done. Miss Ludwick has written us many letters affirming the factual basis of many of Mr. Shaver's stories, and we feel flattered that so highly regarded a writer as Miss Ludwick (T. O'Connor Sloane claimed she was tops before he died) should express herself so flatteringly. Even a pope was once given a blood transfusion under competent medical direction in an effort to stave off old age, so perhaps there is more than a possibility of truth in both Miss Ludwick's and Mr. Shaver's stories!

RECALLING the "old days" brings us to a mention of Henry S. Whitehead's "Bothon" in this issue. Reverend Whitehead is, of course, dead, but this unpublished story of his is far from dead. We consider it a very fine piece of work, and as we read it, we remember that Henry S. Whitehead was himself a researcher into the unusual, and we wonder what he would have said about the stories of Mr. Shaver? It is a very astounding fact to consider that in this story "Bothon," Reverend Whitehead's story is similar in all details to many letters we have from readers who claim to remember, or be reincarnated, or have contact with some weird occult record which describes the events Whitehead describes so graphically in his story. Could it be that "Bothon" is itself a "thought record" or a "racial memory" or did he believe he was reincarnated and the story that formed in his mind was really memory of that former life? It is

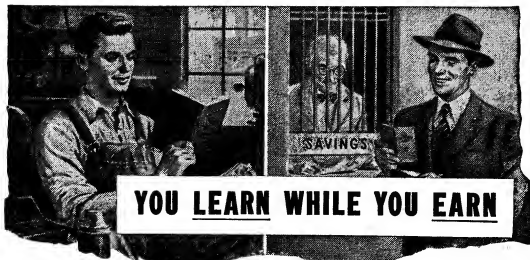
intriguing to wonder what the truth behind "Bothon" really is.

UNCLE DON WILCOX has spun us another!

Yessir, here's the old master with a bell-ringer, a story called "March of the Mercury Men" and we think you'll enjoy it thoroughly. Artist Ned Hadley was the inspiration for this one, having done the illustrations before the story was written, and after looking at the illustrations we felt rather sorry for the author who had to make something out of them! But, we say, leave it to Don. If anybody can do it, he can!

"THE GIFT" is the title of Berkeley Livingston's latest contribution to our pages. It is a story of reincarnated hate and vengeance centering around a valuable dagger. One of the off-trail stories we like to include once in a while to surprise you and give you variety. No monsters in this one, no space ships, just a dagger that kills through the years, again and again.

HUNTING through our files to find something really unique to wind up this issue, we found a story by Mr. and Mrs. John and Dorothy de Courcy which poses an interesting question. How much do we really know about people? Can we say, with any assurance, that every person on the street is just a person, or are there beings in the guise of humans who are not human? What if there were something inhuman, and it could assume human form? Then it stands to reason it could walk around on the street and we'd never pay any attention to it. "Some Are Not Men" is such a story. It tells about creatures who walk about in broad daylight and who look like men but are not. Maybe it is something like this that explains many of the unsolved and horrible crimes that are committed to remain on police blotters as baffling mysteries. We recall the murder of a Chicago child, and we feel impelled to say that maybe the police don't find the killer because he isn't a "man"? It occurred to us to ask Mr. Shaver about this, and he had beaten us to the punch—he had asked the tero to seek out the killer with their rays, and he was told "why should we; he has no knowledge of his deed?" Are the de Courcys right? *Raf.*



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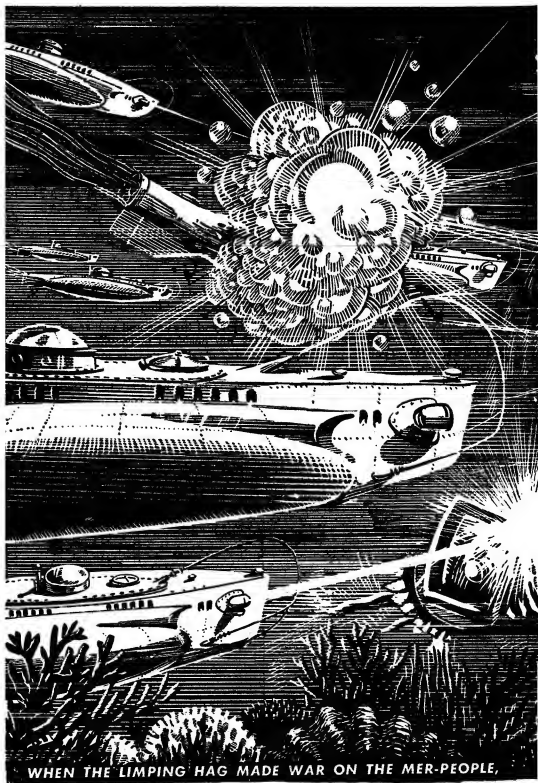
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WHEN THE LIMPING HAG MADE WAR ON THE MER-PEOPLE,

The SEA PEOPLE

By Richard S. Shaver



SHE HAD TO FIGHT IN THE OCEANS OF TWO WORLDS . . . !

FOREWORD

EVERYTHING IN this story, except the incidents, plot, and names, is precisely fact. The extra-terrestrials, half-fish and half-human, their space traveling submersibles filled with the water they breathe, their origin on Venus, my contact with them, all are true. I may have been fooled by some extremely detailed solidograph projections, but if I was—there *do* exist God-like minds equipped with apparatus which by no stretch of the imagination could have been built on this earth. And if my contact with the Sea People was telesolidograph projection of some imaginary thought record of a people who do not exist—the mind who made that record could paint better with his mind, and instantaneously include more detail, than any painter that ever lived on earth. It might have been a thought record from the ancient stock in the caverns—but to me this contact with extra-terrestrial life was completely real—and I myself am a trained artist; I would not have missed the vagueness usually present in imaginary solidograph projections of thought pictures. These pictures were actual transferences of actual, living, breathing, intelligent men and women of a type forgotten on earth except in our legends of the mermen.

Synopsis of First Story of Hecate

(For you fellows who didn't read the first account of my experiences with secret ray peoples—I was shanghaied into the armies of the secret rulers of the caverns, sent to Venus to fight against the finest people I ever saw, for the worst things I ever saw in human form—the vampires under Hecate.

Hecate was an immortal, a witch from antiquity, who long ago in the past discovered in some forgotten manual of horror a method of beating age by continuous infusions of children's blood. Through the centuries her power had grown, and, transplanted to Venus via the antique space ships, still to be found in the secret caverns, had set out to place the whole planet under her horrible rule.

I believe these people exist exactly as described. If they do not, something greater does exist, a mind capable of such strong, full picturization of actual living detail that no living man can tell it from the actual breathing presence of life, cultured intelligent life in all its intricate details.

I talked with them, discussed the problems of inter-spacial relationship under the repression of such a drastic nature as we surface men suffer, and learned to love the beauty of their minds and bodies. The Sea People are one great hope for man's future. They will help.

CHAPTER I

I PUT the cue back in the rack.

Hogan had trounced me again. The pain was worse. I could hardly stand it. And I couldn't say a word to anybody. You can't say that an invisible maniac is burning you with an invisible ray. People just won't believe you. I turned to the Irishman.

"Listen, Hogan, I got to get away from this town. There's a guy after me. A bad one, see? He'll kill me if I stay here. Sell me your papers. I'll give you mine. They're just as much good to you."

"Sure, Steel, one A.B.'s papers are as

You remember how I got away from Hecate when she was fighting off an attack by the White Tuon Amazons from Venus. How I got back up from the caverns into my native city of Boston.

Well, I didn't feel much like living. A man who has tasted the incredible delights of the antique stim mech doesn't get much kick out of boogie woogie. Now that I seemed to have lost all hope of rejoining Ceulna, if she lived, I didn't care much what happened next. But somehow I knew plenty would happen. It always did—to me. I guess you remember Ceulna, the Venusian dancer who rescued me from Hecate's dungeon.

For you who didn't read that account, I had better describe myself a bit. I'm about a head and a half taller than the average man, and

good as another's. But how do I know what the law has against you, you trying to run away the way you are? I don't want any trouble I didn't make myself. See what I mean?"

"I'll throw in the U.S. Navy peajacket with the six bucks I offered you. A guy offered me twelve for it yesterday. How about it?" I hated to give up that warm peajacket.

The Mick eyed the peajacket speculatively.

"These Canadian winters are cold, Hogan. Better take it. That moth motel you're wearing won't do you any good when the wind starts to blow. Better give in and be a buddy, instead of an old Irish grandmammy. I ain't got a thing against me with the law. Just this one bad gee, and he knows me by sight. He wouldn't give a damn what papers I was carrying."

Hogan took a chew of tobacco—then said: "I was just going to ask you to throw in the peajacket and call it a deal. I'm taking a chance, or I wouldn't ask you for the coat. But I figure if you need the papers bad enough to give up that new peajacket on a cold night like this, why, you need help."

The coats and papers changed hands. Now I was Hogan, born in Dublin, and Hogan was me, Big Steel, born in Sandusky, Ohio.

considerably wider. I've hands that are far oversize, even for a man of my size. I suppose I'm good looking, though a bit battered, for my nose is knocked askew and one of my ears is decidedly tin. But my smile is wide and infectious, though my profile is far from Grecian perfection. Football and other activities of the harder kind have given me a map that shows erosion. The clean vitality and friendliness that live in me make me attractive to women, and valuable as a friend to men. I am just a big American, but my size, coupled with my natural speed, give me an edge on any physical competition. You have seen my type working on the docks or in the steel mills of America; wherever the pay is high and an element of danger makes the work attractive, there you will find me.

YOU can't get away from crazy ray pursuit without crossing a lot of water. Those caverns run in a vast network under all our earth, and those little fiends can get around down there just about as easy as a Greyhound gets across the continent. For the caverns are really great highways connecting the ancient cities, and if you look you can find the old rollats sitting there waiting to take you anywhere. Still ready for use, uncorroded by time!

But they can't cross an ocean, because the Sea People live in the caverns under the deeps, and the Sea People are sane, and won't let the mad nomads of the caverns cross. So they can't follow you across an ocean—not every time. I knew that, but not many do know it.

From my experiences with the mad degenerates of the caverns under earth, when they start chasing a surface man with their penetrative rays, he had better find a way to jump across space itself. It is almost impossible to shake them off. They cling to a trail or a hate like a leech. And they don't have much different minds from a leech, at that.

The best place to eat and run at the same time, when you're broke, is in the hold of a liner that's carrying a cargo of fancy groceries. And when you pick out the place to hide in the hold, take

But, let me tell you fellows who look for thrills and adventure—when you get a bellyful of it, you *can* have enough. I have had enough!

How would you like to put a blast into a shipload of beautiful female warriors, or see your friends drop dead around you, boiled to death by scalding water? Since I know something about adventure, I'm a peace loving man. Maybe you'll be too, after you've heard how it all was.

I took up my old life as a steel worker for awhile. Then one of the mad ray people who infest the caverns under some American cities, decided he hated me. I knew what he was, and when he tried to hand me a line of bunkum, I told him off. He started to ray the pants off me. That's where this story begins.)

The Author.

your time and look the ship over. If you look carefully, you'll find a ship where the boilers project into the storage section of the hold, and the boilers will keep you warm.

An hour later I lifted the hatch of the liner called the *Newfoundland*. I found a place near the boilers and made myself comfortable with some bags of flour for a bed. Warm and dry, and plenty of food in the hold. I had watched the dock wallopers load her yesterday, and she was taking on fancy groceries by the ton.

I fell asleep. When I woke up the North Atlantic was gurgling and splashing past the steel plates of the hull, and the engines were throbbing. The soft sway of the ship, the running thump of busy feet overhead, the tug whistles outside—everything told me we were going places. And was I glad!

If the big tub docked in England, on the other side of the drink, I'd be free of the d. . . . Hoblok, the imp from Hell, the little Horla, Crazy Max, who had been driving me nuts for over a year. Ever since I got away from old Hecate, under Boston, the city where I was living then.

BUT the big *Newfoundland* docked at St. Johns. St. Johns, in case you don't know, is the capital of Newfoundland, and this particular ship always stopped there on the last leg of her trip to England. But how was I to know? I was no seaman.

I was discovered in the hold by long-shoremen putting in more cargo. They turned me over to the cops, and the judge gave me twenty days. That ship was chock full of fancy groceries, and I had bedded down over those nice warm boilers for a good long rest. The dock wallopers were over-solicitous.

The grub in the Newfoundland jails isn't near what a man can get for him-

self out of a hold full of the best. But I was lucky, I guess. The Newfoundland winters are no joke, and outside the cell window the snow was coming down. All day it came down, the first day. I'd spent my last dough for the papers from Hogan, the Irishman from Dublin, so I could stay on the other side when I got there. I had to have the papers. He knew it, I suppose by the look a guy gets when he is followed by something he can't see or talk about. Lots of men that don't know what it is go crazy when they're *it*. But I knew, so I ran.

CHAPTER II

MY first night in St. Johns' jail, I bummed a cigarette from the guard, who was dozing outside my cell in the hall. He was a right guy. "No smoking in the cells," he said, real loud for the neighbors' benefit, then slipped me a cig.

I was lying there, taking a drag at it, with my blanket over my head in case the wrong guy looked in the cell door. A little voice-ray came into my blanket.

"Hello, Hogan, alias Steel. What are you doing here?"

I said, "Who are you? An old friend, or a new one?"

The ray said—"A new one, maybe. Maybe I've got a message for you."

Then another ray came in through the wall—one of the big ones—and said in a large way—"Look!"

I let the blanket down from my head and let out a slight yip. For, squatted in the corner, was a bigger spider than there is! It was six foot high. At first I thought it was a record picture of a Venusian arachniden—a real monster. Then it moved forward and it had a woman's head. A very beautiful brunette head, it was. I wondered if I was nuts or if they really

were giving me that kind of projection.

The spider woman came closer, said, "Ah, my love!"

I spoke up quickly—"I'm *not* loving any spider!"

She replied, "That's what you think." Then she stuck a big stinger into my center section.

I was paralyzed. What else is a spider-sting supposed to do to you? No, I thought, I'm not paralyzed. Anyway, I was chock full of tobacco juice. I could see it rolling around inside me, for the ray made me semi-transparent. I lay there exhausted, and the big spider laughed at me with her beautiful woman's face, and soon disappeared through the wall. I was hoping the guard would poke his head up to the door grill and look in, but he didn't. I wonder if he would have fainted or just gone quietly crazy?

I LAY there in a strange torpor for about half an hour, and all through me a fierce growth went on, a strangely pleasant growth. I felt like a mother. I soon learned I was a mother! For out of my skin began to pop a myriad of tiny spiders. I was afraid to move, for fear of crushing my little children. In the distance I could hear the little ray imps laughing at me, but I didn't move anyway. Those little spiders might be intelligent.

Then I woke up, and looked around carefully for little spiders. There weren't any. I said—"Now ain't that the doggondest adventure you ever had, Steel? You, a mother!"

Such is the ancient magic—it can do anything, no matter how fantastic or incredible, and make it seem true. What had happened to me was just strong thought projection plus the telesolidograph,¹ which responds to thought as a horse to the reins.

Well, after I had borne the spider

woman's children, she returned and began to talk to me. Only she had dropped the spider woman and was just a big, beautiful, friendly brunette. She told me, among other things, that a ship of the Sea People's lay off the shore, in the waters of the bay that is St. Johns' harbor.

I expressed curiosity, for I had heard of the Sea People of Venus while among the Tuon Amazons of Venus, but I had never met any of them.

Then the woman, who did not bother giving me her name, though I often lie and fit syllables to her really beautiful appearance, told me: "This ship contains some members of the race who have heard of you. They might be able to help you get what I read in your mind you want. They will talk to you tonight—so I am warning you—they can give you what you want—but they are proud, and unless they consider you worthy, they won't deal exactly well with you. So guard those Hag-inspired corridors of your mind, for they may get the idea that you are a rotter. You aren't, are you?"

"What?" I said, "Me a rotter?"

"Sometimes, thinking of your past with the vampire, Hecate, you can look pretty rotten to one who has never been a mind slave. So watch it, you big, good looking hick, you."

"Thanks, beautiful. With you around I won't be a rotter, anyway."

I sighed, for I knew you can't love every woman, but my heart sometimes tries to. They can be so darn attractive. But maybe you never had that

¹ In my other stories, I've explained telesolidograph projection to you. It is an antique device that can project a picture that looks solid, feels solid, is practically solid—yet it can be projected through a solid wall—or through miles of solid rock. What you tell such a machine to do it will do. So one is never quite sure, in contacts with the ray people, what is true and what is mere humorous bamboozlement.—Author

trouble? Well, you never talked to a beautiful woman over a soul-revealing telaug ray. You think you saw beauty when the stage smoothy took off some of her wraps? Brother, when a woman shows her soul over a telaug ray, there is no hope for you. You are sunk; that's final. And when you have met more than one woman over such a ray, the heart gets a bit confused. Then, when you do meet your own woman, she looks in your mind and sees the effect of those others, and does she get to work with the mental eraser! And how you hate to give them up. You know how it is when friend wife puts her foot down on your special pin-ups. Well, multiply that by a thousand!

THEN I made my first contact with the Sea People. My first impressions were delighted surprise, for the Sea People are something. They didn't project pictures of themselves into the cell, as earth ray would have done. They beamed me, and the beam from their wonder mech transported me, sensorily—bodily into the main center salon of their submersible interplanetary ship, where they lay off Newfoundland in the deep water.

The room was lavish, colorful, beautiful. The Sea People were a kind of fan-tailed mermen. I gathered that one of their numerous homes was Venus. There they swim openly in the warm waters of the seas. Here on earth they stay within the ship, breathing the water that is artificially warmed and aerated and pumped through their ship just as air would be if they were air breathers. They are very beautiful people and unlike our conception of merwomen, have two legs that are not legs, but great driver fins, connected to the body by long knee-less, serpentine jointed legs. Their scales are prismatic, and above the hips their skin is human

in appearance. But more of all that later—

Sometime after my talk with the dark women of the native Newfoundland subterranean ray people—a ray came into the cell from the Sea People. My impression was of being transported to their ship—and in the course of the conversation they told me they knew me—knew what I knew about Hecate—and in order to use me against her—were going to get me out of that jail the same night.

I could hardly listen for watching their long, knee-less, serpentine legs in lovely motion in the water. I, the visitor, was a full projection in three dimensions within a suspended globe of silver force in the center of the chamber. About this picturing ring they swam slowly as they talked to me—what seemed to be me—for I was much more conscious of being present within that ring of force than being aware of my identity.

As is the polite custom among all ray peoples, they gave me thrilling caresses of augmented synthetic body electric. It is something like meeting a soul with its insulation removed. Or like holding a great human heart in your hands and feeling it love you so strongly that your whole body swoons from the sensation. These merwomen were beyond a mere man's power to meet in love, it was more like admiring the ultimate in woman-soul as it was displayed before you; in fact there are no words or phrases in the language of surface men to describe such sensations. All I can tell you is to imagine your most intimate, sacred, and pleasant emotions augmented by an electric device to many thousand times their normal power. The result would be similar to what a man feels when one of the Sea People's merwomen shakes his hand and smiles—over the telaug solidograph.

CHAPTER III

THE jail delivery came about unexpectedly, in spite of the fact that I was waiting for it. I had fallen asleep and was dreaming sweetly of my Amazon sweetheart, wherever she might be—when a cry of "Fire!" brought me to my feet. The air was hot, and down the corridor I could see the glare of flames through my bars.

Guards ran down the corridors, then, driven back by the flames, they set to unlocking the doors and shouting: "All out, and gather in the courtyard!" It was just a bull-pen outside the prison, but the Newfoundlanders called it a "courtyard."

The corridor was full of struggling men fighting for the doorway, when a cold and invisible hand laid hold of my arm with an irresistible pressure and I was drawn down a smaller side hall. At the end was a door, ajar. Outside the night was empty of life. The hand on my arm drew me swiftly onward into the dark. In ten minutes the prison was out of sight behind.

In an hour I was at the water's edge, the mighty roar of the Atlantic on the rocks of St. Johns' breakwater the only sound. Up the line of breakers my invisible captor drew me, and finally, out of sight of all possible observation, I was drawn swiftly out into the roaring breakers. I knew better than to resist, but the water in my throat choked me, and I was well nigh drowning. Thirty feet from shore, where the white smother lessened, lay a shadow in the water, and the hand drew me to the shadow, and then I was inside a little undersea boat.

My guide was seated at the controls, holding the boat firm as a rock, with magnetic grapple rays, and at the same time guiding me with a solidograph projection of her own right hand, invisible

in ordinary light—but powerful enough to be, in all ways, as strong and real as a genuine hand.

These Sea People were twenty feet from fin-tip to head crest; twenty feet is a lot of strength—and in this case a very great deal of beautiful woman, too. She shot the boat backward into the deeper water. Over her head was a glass-like globe—a mask, in which was the water she breathed in place of air. Instead of a helmet for me, she had emptied the boat of water, and donned a helmet herself. She answered my unspoken thought. "I have no helmet for you."

I THOUGHT I had better speak up while I had time, for I had no way of knowing what they might think of me. For all I knew, they considered me as a true enemy, a true follower of Hecate, and hence but a hostage in their hands. I said: "I have an idea you think me something of a poor, honorless wretch, and as such, not worthy of honor from you—or of consideration. I want to say that I have done evil against your people and friends, the White Venusians, but only under mind-augment control from Hecate. I could not have done otherwise. Please remember I am not truly a follower of Hecate's, but was sent into her service as a spy by the Tuons."

"To me, your name is Hogan, and I do not hold anything against you. Your first use to us is as a source of information—you know Hecate's ways better than any other living man. We want to know them, too. You have been assigned to me. I will pay you for the information. Do not fear us, we will deal honorably with you, even though we may despise you. We are not entirely impractical. Incidentally, I am Lt. Ol-tissa, officer in the Venusian Under Sea People's Colonial Navy."

Since I know that few of you have sat within inches of a twenty-foot long merwoman and talked business with her, I will try to tell you what such an experience is really like. It sounds like a fish story now, as I tell it, but in truth it did not seem so as she sat there, still gleaming from her recent expulsion of the water from the little submersible.

Everywhere the water was dripping; cold, glittering droplets of it upon her body, that body that was not human, yet was instinct with a mighty measure of that thing we know as human beauty. Her skin was not scaly, even in those parts of her most fishlike. Her odor was not fishlike either, but rather more like a bather might smell, if she had been in a frogpond—batrachian, if you follow. So was her skin an iridescent, unscaly, smoothly mottled skin of a glistening sheen that surpassed the polish any sculptor ever lavished on his stone mermaid. Her back, finned and greenish, and her head-crest, an upthrust glory of thin spines and gleaming membranes upon her gloriously erect head, were the only parts of her body above the hips that were not wholly human. The front parts of her torso were white skinned and perfectly sculpted by nature's ages of selection in their life in the undersea strongholds, to express the ultimate of form to the male. Her face, wide nostriled, gave little hint of her water breathing nature. Her gill slits, oddly enough, were under her arms, down where our short ribs are situated. Now they spurted water, in short, rapid jets, releasing the water from her helmet taken in by her nostrils. The helmet was supplied with water by a hose from a pump.

But the long muscled, serpentine grace of her is the thing that impressed me most—the powerful driving grace of her long, sinuously muscled body. Her hands, too, were not human, being

nearly a yard long, webbed, and powerfully fingered, with sharp talons on the finger ends, that seemed not to interfere with her dexterity upon the complex keys of the control board of the little ship, equipped as it was with powerful armament, all controlled from the great panel in front of her—as well as the telaug, stim ray, and beneficial ray equipment that is anciently standard among ray people.

I suspected that the type of equipment used by these undersea people was different in conductivity from the kind of equipment I was used to as a slave of Hecate. As I learned later, it was much more effective in the conductivity of surrounding water than in the medium of air.

I DID not bring these Sea Venusians into the former story of Hecate, because they stayed in the background during my visit there, and because I heard but little of them. They did not meddle much in the affairs of land people. *But now they were ready to meddle.* The reason, I learned from our talk: The Hag had taken to hiding in the depths of the sea, and was preying on their colonies here on earth for the children she and her blood-taker followers must have to stay alive.

Among other captives, she had taken a certain scientist, a female named Hyplotee, a woman who was extremely important to the Sea People, for the reason that she bore heredity secrets in her mind, a legacy from the far past. The secret they feared to lose was the location of a cache of extremely powerful antique weapon mech, whose location was kept from general knowledge because of the tremendous destructive power of the weapons. Hyplotee was the sole repository of this knowledge. Hecate had got wind of this bit of information and had managed to capture

Hyplotee when she took one of the Sea People's undersea cities.

The Venusian merwoman's voice was low as she told me all this. "You have some things we want. Your acquaintance with Hecate, your knowledge of the workings of her mind, and the value she places on your person. She has obtained some of our ships, destroyed and made slaves of the people of several of our smaller colonies here. She has learned to live in the depths of our heretofore inviolate oceans. It is our business to find her and obliterate her. We fear her quite as much as ever did the Tuons of Venus. They cannot help us in our underwater war on Hecate, but you can. Will you?"

The powerful inner life of the merwoman, who was a leader of her people and a woman very much alive—spread before me in a swift play of explanation—an infinitely attractive, sudden revelation of her character. It was a sweet dropping of all mental guards for my inner self to see that she had no evil motives in her propositions to me. The attraction of her was too much for me. Though I had sworn never to touch anything to do with Hecate again, I could not keep my oath. I answered, "I will help you if I can."

THEN she sprang her kicker on me.

"We have planned a use for you, as an emissary to her from us. You could get to see her; one of us would be killed before we reached her."

My God—they expected me to walk into Hecate's hands voluntarily!

"But what good could I do, if I did reach her? She would not let go of me again. You know what she has trained me for, what kind of a thing I am when in her hands. If that is all you want—a messenger to Hecate—count me out now. I don't want any." I was as nearly angry as a man can get under

the fearful attraction that such beings exercise upon a male. "She could not be fooled again by the mental radio which the Whites inserted in my brain sheath before. How could I serve you, in her hands? I would be just one more unit of opposition, if you are in opposition to her."

The merwoman continued, "She started by capturing one of our ships, and from that one she designed and built others. Now she is in open war with us. She thinks we are much easier to deal with than the air-breathers, because we have never had any opposition in our native element, and know little of war. But we have a plan. You are a part of it. What have you to live for, among your own people? We can offer you life-value, we can offer you an immensely richer life than you have at present. What have you to lose?"

"I just can't figure how your offer would do me much good if I am to walk into the hands of Hecate the first thing I do. No thanks, again."

The seawoman's voice, answering, was as cold as the great deeps. "You do not know us well, Mr. Hogan. When you do, you will know better than to refuse what we offer. Until then, I must requisition your services, much as it pains me. We need you, and you are in no position to refuse."

It seemed that whether I liked it or not, I was going to go to work for these Venusian Sea People. They felt no compunction about the matter, for, not knowing me well, and knowing I was once one of the Hag's favorites, they probably had no high opinion of me. For that matter, I could not blame them. The things I had done under Hecate's powerful mind control had so covered the sheets of my memory with a sense of terrible guilt that in spite of the facts of the case, I felt inwardly that I must be a scoundrel. I was a scoun-

drel, but it was not my fault. Hecate had carefully made me into a tool and a plaything, and her control—the mind operations she had performed upon me to make me what she wished, a slave of her unspoken will—had not done my real character any good. I *mean* well enough, I mused, but somehow it never turns out.

BEFORE Lt. Oltissa was a remarkable mapping device. It was a device apparently based on the principle of magnetism, which expresses itself most noticeably in the resemblance of window frost to trees and landscapes. It was a sheet of glass, balanced upon a gyroscopically leveled table, a table that was held perfectly level in spite of the surrounding gyrations of the submersible ship. Over the surface of the glass a fine sand was constantly in motion—and the motion very strangely and magically depicted the changing conformation of the country round about—the sea bottom and its intricate ups and downs—as perfectly as though some sorcerer were working with the sand with invisible hands. The scale of the thing was controlled by a dial at the side of the table, with the markings of the dial indicating the units of measurement—miles to inches of the scale topography map, or relief map. Their name for it was—translated—the motile map.

By some peculiar development of the knowledge of the laws of magnetism, the mysterious currents of electricity which everywhere pulse in the earth, were here tuned in upon by the magnetized sand, which then arranged itself magnetically upon the plane surface exactly in accordance with the conformations of the surroundings. It was the best device they could have had for undersea navigation, and it worked perfectly. I realized, after I looked at

it awhile, that the frost we are so used to seeing upon a window pane, must also arrange itself to represent some landscape nearby, but the uncontrolled atunement of the magnetism renders the whereabouts or recognizance of the frost picture impossible.

Oltissa, seeing me examining the device intently, commented: "It is an interesting bit of work. Just as one's eyes see force lines of power as light, so does this mechanical eye see the reflections and deviations of magnetic force lines as light—and forms a reflection of these reflections and deviations upon the sand screen, in much the same way the eyes form a reflection by the nerves upon the screens inside the mind. It is a very useful device because of its great range. You can travel through the water at great depths at speeds of a hundred and more miles per hour, and yet see the whole floor of the ocean unroll before you as clearly as though equipped with telescopic eyes that penetrate any darkness."

"What has the Hag been doing?" I asked Oltissa.

"When she escaped the Venusian White raid, she took a ship lying at the dock in the undersea entrance of the caverns where you were first taken into the caves. There were about a hundred or so with her, the worst of the lot. They drove the ship into the depths of the Atlantic, and plunging it into a bank of ooze out of sight, managed to escape the searchers. After the Venusians returned to their home, Hecate took over an ancient deep sea cavern and began to build up her power once more, as I have told you. We want to stop her before she has grown too powerful."

"I should think the advantage would lie with you, because of your knowledge of life in the depths of the sea. She is out of her element in the water."

"One would think so, but the persuasive powers of the Hag, of which you know so well, have enlisted some of the captives from our numbers in her service, and of course they are not ignorant of our methods."

AS WE talked, Oltissa had driven the little submersible alongside a huge, dark bulk looming in the water. She explained, "This ship we are in is the only one which is equipped with apparatus to maintain an air supply. It will be taken into the locks, where it will stay, and you must remain inside till we come for you. Do not try to get out. You cannot escape." Oltissa smiled a bit too friendly upon me, but I could not know that it meant anything except a desire to make me feel at ease. Then she left through the door locks.

I watched her painful progress on the floor till she reached the water lock, and through the window the sudden grace and ease of movement that was hers when she was in the water again and free of her air helmet. She flirted those long double tail fins of hers and shot out of sight into the fantastically huge corridors of the ship in which my little prison lay like a barnacle in a cranny.

CHAPTER IV

L T. OLTISSA brought me an air helmet the next day, and I was released from my little prison into the great water-filled ship. I felt like a frog playing ambassador to a barracuda court. Those mermen were big and powerful. They must have weighed four to six times as much as a man, and they moved through the water with the grace and speed of a porpoise or a seal. In fact, with much more of both than either, or any other water life.

I could not get over my delight at the lovely appearance of the women of the Sea People. For they were like our legendary mermaids, except for structural differences I will explain: first, their iridescent fan-tails weaving ever soft beauty in the water; and then the fact that, unlike our conception of the mermaids, they had two legs that were not legs, but great drivers, muscular, serpentine pillars of strength that ended in those iridescent fan-tails that were not too large to impede swimming.

I tottered about in my magnetic shoes and face mask with air tank on my back, goggle-eyed at the wonderful art of their life, as it was displayed both about their persons and on the walls and appointments of the chambers of the great ship. This ship was modeled after the ancient craft, but was built, like others of their fleet, by the ingenuity and engineering ability of the mermen themselves—the first time I had contacted people capable of producing anything like the ancient mechanisms that were to me the acme of a God's progress.

The walls were painted, or inlaid, with mosaics of vari-colored sea shells, cut to fit the pattern of the picture, and gleamed iridescently in the water-light with all the colors we associate with tropical undersea life. Under these huge mosaics were long upholstered benches where the merwomen reclined when not lashing the water of the chamber into—to me—overwhelming maelstroms of current with their activity.

Through the water swam the multi-hued rainbow fishes of Venus, and if you think it is indelicate to eat a raw fish, you should have seen a Princess of the Sea People pick one off in her flashing white teeth without pausing in her stroke down the chamber toward some swift-demanding duty. As graceful as Gods themselves, the act of eating a

raw fish was nothing except natural and beautiful. Getting as close to one as possible, I tried to find out if the fish she was about to eat had scales, for I could not see how a throat so nearly human could engulf fins, spines, head, tail and scales of a fish without disaster. Perhaps she did it to befuddle me, for I did not notice any other feats of the kind. Perhaps she released the fish from her mouth as she turned the corner out of my sight, and laughed delightedly at my expression. And perhaps not, too. Anyway, they were a beautiful and delightful people, more cultured as a whole than any I had met on Earth or Venus, and the great power of their mighty, serpentine bodies was not confined to muscles, but could be unleashed into devastatingly accurate thought upon occasion.

THOSE occasions were all too frequent, as I learned when I pled my cause against my approaching fate at the hands of Hecate and they argued that I had nothing to fear, since it was not my fault I was not with Hecate *now*, and she would welcome me—whereas the Lady Hyplatee would be slain or worse unless released at once.

They said I could undergo the slight discomfort of Hecate's amorous attentions for their sakes, if I was a brave and good man, and I agreed. The next minute the eyes of the Hag, blazing yellow cauldrons of lust or anger, would arise in my fevered brain, and I would invent another reason why they should not do this thing. Their scorn of "my unwillingness to do such a trifle for the sake of a noble and good lady," at last lashed me into shamefaced silence. They were right; I put the best face I could upon the matter and agreed.

All the while the mermaids courted the mermen, or vice versa, and their love-making had none of the prudish

hesitancy of landlubbers. They were more vitally alive than men, and they had an abundance of the potent aids to love making that the Gods of the past have devised and which the Sea People had learned to make as well. The scene was a batrachian revel—I mean bacchanalian revel to conventional eyes—though to their eyes it was normal everyday pleasant relations between friends and lovers.

Ah, well, who is to say what is right and wrong? Life has ever displayed its fecundity as it existed—and the Sea People were no exception to nature's rule. Those bodies, so long of waist and white of bosom, so sinuous of limb, so powerful—yet so utterly cultured and graceful of movement and expressive in thought-form upon the conductive water that conveyed all their thoughts constantly one to the other in complete frankness and openness—seemed to have no need of subterfuge, having no evil designs. A complete knowledge of each others' inner thought from childhood gave them a more complete happiness than ours ever is. The psychiatrists may be right in saying that it is necessary to reveal our thought or it will fester in the darkness. There were no hidden complexes or frustrations festering in the minds of the crew of the long *Sea Dragon* as it slipped deeper into the great deeps of the Atlantic in search for the route to the hide-out of Hecate. They knew the approximate position, but the exact spot, being hidden, was not going to be easy to find.

AS THE ship sank deeper into the darkening water, I was forced to leave the fascinating scene of the strange life of the Sea People, and take refuge in a heavy air tank, against the mounting pressure. The Sea People, inured to pressures of the deeps since childhood, apparently didn't mind the

increasing pressure. The ship, being in complete contact with the water outside by means of its intake or breather pipes, was in no danger from pressure, the pressure equalizing naturally. I suppose some physiological mechanism within the bodies of these ancient people of the deep sea likewise adjusted interior pressure to outer pressure, for they evinced no fear of the depths whatever.

For myself, the air pressure was bad enough, though the gradual descent made my adjustment natural and not unbearable. I knew the desperation of Hecate, air-breather like myself, that she should take up life under the unpleasant conditions of greatly increased air pressure which she must undergo constantly. What a fearful rage of maddened desperation must possess her, having been forced to hide down here since I had last seen her in flight from the White Venusians.

Through the tiny window of super-thick glass in my tank I watched the crew in the big control chamber. Over the sand-plane device called the motile map bent the chief, Motora, looking like Neptune himself with a world at stake, as indeed it seemed was true.

Something of the place they sought must have shown on the delicate tracery of revealing sand of the electrified plane, for Motora raised his hand and the big ship checked its motion and lay still as any fish, when fearful of the maw of a greater fish. The tenseness grew; I could feel it even inside the thick metal walls of the tank. My breath steamed the glass, and I wiped it away with my sleeve, peering intently—as if by my will to shape the will of fate itself.

My one hope of final deliverance from the hands of Hecate that had reached me even in the jail of St. Johns; my one chance of ever seeing Ceulna

again—lay in these peoples' desire to crush Hecate, and it seemed that to crush Hecate they must have this Hypolotee, the fish-finned handmaiden of wisdom whom Hecate had captured. To have her, they intended to barter me. It didn't seem like much of a plan to me, but perhaps they knew what they were doing.

If I could but hear . . . Something was coming over the visiphone, and an image of someone outside was upon the screen—but who or what I couldn't make out. It seemed my hour had come and it was Hecate's long arms for me, and no sweet maiden of my own choice. I was again to be the favorite of Hecate, the Horror of Venus, the Mother of Sin, the ancient undying spawn of Time itself. Was ever a man so accursed by an unwanted female? Witch I could have taken without a murmur; age, too, I could have put up with—but the hideous life in the mighty body of that Mother of Sin, the awful, undying lure of the will to procreate within her—the utter degradation of losing one's self and will, losing all claim to manhood under the dominating stare of her yellow eyes . . . Something in me writhed and crawled out of sight beneath the self-loathing that my deeds under her dominance raised in me. No spider ever sauntered into the jaws of his devouring mate with less desire for his fate than I had as the mermen hooked chains about my air-cell and swung my prison toward a lock in the side of the ship. That creaking crane was delivering me to Hecate willy-nilly, and I was a hero for giving up myself in exchange for the noble lady of the Sea People—but a most unwilling hero I was, in spite of all the logic of value to the future my mind conjured about the deed. It wasn't just right, somehow—but I had consented. Well, so be it, but Devil take it, too.

CHAPTER V

OUTSIDE, the darkness closed down about the window through which I peered—as helpless as a clam in his shell—trying to see the swimming giants about me, or trying to catch a glimpse of my captors.

When I did walk out of that metal cell, it was to face the yellow eyes, the great gray shoulders, the Medusa hair and the sinister smile of my former mistress, Hecate. She was seated, as when I had first seen her, in the great crystal nest of some forgotten god, bathed in the ancient, miracle-ray of life-force that came from the indestructible mechanisms that only a god could build. From her side twitched a slender force finger of compulsion, and within my mind raised the old, hideous compulsion, the awful attraction which she so well knew how to create. I was her slave; she had shaped my mind to her will. I was again her thing.

Step by step I mounted toward her. Her great yellow eyes blazed in mingled anger, a faint joy at seeing me again, and the pleasure in dominating me that had always been hers. Her huge arms rose toward me. I was paying for the release of a human greater in value than myself—human, even though one of the Sea People—even though she was as much fish as woman. Hyplotee had gone free. Hecate did have an affection for me, I had a value to her. I was surprised that anything resembling affection could dwell in that time-hardened heart, but only a God could have explored the recesses of her mind and come out sane and unpuzzled. She was a maze of contradictions, unpredictable, cruel; a vampire upon the blood of children for an age; a thing as unwanted to any natural human as a tarantula cuddling at his breast.

Life can be impossible of compre-

hension. If there be a greater God, it seems that he has dropped this earth from his knowledge and left us to our resources. I felt betrayed by all men, but what man has not had that feeling? Great as were the Sea People, I had no real hope that anyone would ever finally best and kill this monster that time forgot. Hecate was Hecate, as resourceful as the Goddess whose name she bore; or for all I know she may have been that ancient Goddess of evil herself—long ago.

“YOU have wandered far from Hecate.” Her smile was peculiar. I could not know if she was playing with me, waiting to vent her obvious anger with events upon me, or if she meant really to welcome me again to my former place in her affections. “Did you mean to break your oath to me that night in Boston so long ago? How long is it—one year or three? Things have happened rapidly since then. It has been touch and go for me with your friends, the Whites. But they seem to have given up the search. I am growing stronger; your place by my side can be a rich one. Are you still of a mind to flee from me?”

I knew she had read my own unwilling mind, to get that picture of myself stealing away from the battle through the stairs to the surface, when all the rest had fallen beside me and Hecate herself had rushed to a new center of ray—another and greater emplacement, to continue that battle—or had gone to the ships that waited in the deep waterway to the undersea.

“I did not flee,” I lied to her, for I did not care to confess the whole truth, and what I was saying was a half truth good enough to conceal my guilt that showed mentally. “I didn’t know where to find you. If I had waited there, I would have been killed. I took

the only way out, knowing you would find me when opportunity offered. I did not return to the Whites, did I?" This was the only lie—for I had had no opportunity to return.

"No, you did not, they were too busy trying to pin me to the wall. They didn't do it. They failed, as they always will. I know more about war-ray and the ways of the men who built these great weapons and caverns than all their scientists and wise men put together. But—let be; you are back in your old place by my side—as you swore when I released your friend Ceulna from the death in the dream room. And here you must stay; you have sworn it. And if you break your oath to me—" her eyes grew horrible in her great, grimly smiling face, her fangs thrust at me like the spider she was, and the baby blood rushed pinkly under her gray skin to warm the death-in-life that she was—"if you break that oath—the death you will die will be such a one as Satan himself would not have desired, when he lay under Everest for a thousand years in chains and pain-beneficial. Do not forget that either, my little man."

"Hecate is threatening me," I said, curious tones in my voice. "Hecate has changed. Hecate either forgives, or acts. But threaten—never."

"It is a simple fact, and no threat. One more slip on your part and there will be no forgiveness, for I do not take chances on my people. They are either wholly mine or they are dead. Let me see your thought."

SHE activated the greater augmentative rays, and within my skull my mind woke to life under her will. Swiftly she worked over it, noting the changes, my inner struggles to release myself of the awful compulsion to search for her, to find her, the mad-

dening uncertainty as to the fate of Ceulna, all the thought that had tormented me since that fateful night when the Whites had driven her into the depths of the sea.

And as she read my thought, the little force rays under her fingers leaped to change the struggle to complacency, the will to freedom to a will to submit to her will, the self in me to become again a reflection only of her self. Her ego replaced mine under her skillful hands, and when she looked up from her work, all the painful effort of two long years was wiped out. I was again her slave. And this time there was no Tuon-White service watching from afar to release me at any moment. This time I was in for it. I would remain her thing.

CHAPTER VI

AND then I woke up, for the gray cylinder of metal in which I had been imprisoned by the pressure of the depths was suddenly jerked back into the lock, and the *Sea Dragon* shot upward at tremendous acceleration. The ooze of the bottom swirled under our driver's glass, obscuring our bulk from the eyes of the Hag's ray warriors, crouching somewhere under the muck within their time-forgotten fortress that Hecate had remembered in her extremity.

I had been asleep from pressure exhaustion, and dreaming. Something must have gone wrong with the exchange. Probably Hecate had attempted to get hold of me without giving Hyplotee her freedom—had tried to double-cross the Sea People and failed. And in that sleep of exhaustion, I dreamed I was again in the arms of Hecate and powerless to resist the synthetic lure of the tremendous antique generators of stimulative energy-flows.

I was vastly relieved when the *Sea Dragon* reached the surface and I could step out of my tank into the air helmet and again talk with my kindly captors.

"The old witch tried to pull a fast one," Oltissa explained, as I entered the big central chamber of the ship where the long bodies of the fish men rested between shifts, or danced—as they called their gyrations to the soft pulse of the nerve music of the Sea People, or sprawled on the floor playing their game of "hacra"—a game like chess, but different in formation and moves.

"I fell asleep and dreamed, from the weakness due to the pressure," I laughed. "I dreamed she had me again. She wrapped her arms around me—and I woke up, to find myself being drawn back into the ship. It was uncanny—a magical bit of work. I had given up hope—"

"Hogan, you don't mean to tell us you don't love her?!" Oltissa was again indulging in what had been her chief amusement since I had met her—kidding me about my erotic relations with the ugliest female on two planets.

I sprawled beside her long, rather overwhelming beauty and looked up into the great, water-emerald eyes of her. "Oltissa, how about that promise you made me? Is that off now?"

"No, Hogan, if we can find Ceulna for you—if she exists—you will be restored to your beloved. Or she will be restored to you."

"It's fifty-fifty, Oltissa. Sometimes she is dominant, and sometimes I am. It's really love. And can she bawl me out about Hecate! But tell me, what did the Hag pull just now that made you call off the trade?"

"She sent out an undersea crawler, supposed to contain Hyplotée and an operating crew only. When they reached what they thought was point-blank range, they opened fire. Ap-

parently Hecate is not so interested in getting hold of you as we had supposed. Our crew intercepted the fire with defense screens of shorter-flow, and we 'scrammed', as you say."

"Yes, it is either that she is no longer interested in me, or she is trying to get from Hyplotée the secret whereabouts of the ancient master-weapons of Venus. In the latter case things look mighty black for the Sea People, do they not?"

"That is true, Hogan. But her attempts to reach the hidden place may lead us to the ancient cache—and also may expose her strength to our fleets. The seas of Venus are not a place for Hecate to operate unscathed, I assure you. But we have plans."

"**O**LTISSA, if I were running things—now that the Sea People definitely know where Hecate is located, I would order an all-out attack upon her stronghold. I wouldn't wait for her to get set."

"Such an order has already gone out, my Hogan. You happen to be right—it is the moment for attack. But you know how far Venus is from here. We have to wait for our full strength."

"And if you must draw forces from Venus for this attack, you must take measures to make sure that Hecate has not anticipated such a move and decided to use the opportunity to reach the cache of which only Hyplotée knows, and now—perhaps Hecate."

"That is true, Hogan. She may outwit us in that. But only watchfulness could help us, for we do not know where this place may be upon all Venus."

"Oltissa, why not search again the old records and books of Hyplotée's family home, the archives of Alor? Search until you find the ancient secret. It may be that a search would turn the thing up for you, without Hyplotée. At

least, the effort would not be too expensive. It may be that even Hyplotee must go to the ancient family home place of Alor to obtain a map to find the exact spot. In that case, you must have men posted there to tell you if Hecate attempts to raid Alor, men who can summon devastation upon Hecate."

"You are thoughtful, Mr. Hogan. I will see that that particular little trap is set for the old she-devil, your love." Oltissa smiled wickedly at me. "You are a traitor to your true love when you plan so against Hecate. Think of all the joy, the god-like joy in her arms you will lose if we kill the immortal Hecate. Do you not wish to be immortal, too? I am surprised, Hogan."

And Oltissa flashed a way, the thought-laughter of her vibrating in the water beside me where she had just lain her great woman-strength, her iridescent fins fanning the scented liquid into many cool ripples against me. I sighed. Somehow I couldn't take it; it was a sore spot that I should always be mocked for having been the lover of the ugliest woman of two planets. To the Venusians, who thought so greatly of beauty that ugliness had almost been bred out of their races, it was impossible that a man could have affection for anything ugly. But they had not felt Hecate's super-strong stim, her endless supply of peculiar pleasure rays chosen from the loot of two planets full of the antique mechanisms left by the God races. Hecate had planted powerful hypnotic impulses that made my unwillingness body-cells her slaves—and the love for her that lived in me in spite of my own will, was always present to be seen by their sensitive minds over the continually-used thought augmentative machines spread throughout their ships and their homes, so that everyone was always pretty fully conscious of all the thought of everyone

around him. It was like wearing a clown suit, to be forever conscious of a love for an ugly, hated woman, their worst enemy.

THOUGH they were capable of removing this mental excrescence from my mind, they had not done so, as the mental operation by their compulsion and hypnotic rays would have removed my value to them as an exchange for their Hyplotee. Now that this need for my services had been removed by Hecate's attack upon their exchange ship, I had hoped that they would tend to this humiliating excrescence in my mind, but as yet they had not done so. However, they were a people at war, and time just now was the essence of opportunity, I knew. The next few hours might determine their future fate. Would Hecate get to the ancient cache, or would they manage to crush her first?

I could not believe that Hecate would hold out against the combined fleets of the Sea People, but so far most of their strength remained on Venus. The few colonies of them that had been planted in Earth's seas were not capable of handling Hecate alone. But those colonies in Earth's seas were already centuries old, and not weak, by any means.

If I had been running things, I would have attacked at once, rather than wait for the ancient Vampire to strengthen. She must be very weak in numbers, even though two years had passed since she had eluded the fleets of the White Venusians. Two years' work by her few remaining followers could not have rebuilt her strength as it was on Venus before her defeat, for she had had centuries on Venus and on Earth to attain her former position. She must be weak; why not attack and find out?

These thoughts I kept uppermost in my mind, hoping they might influence

the thoughts of the officers about me. Perhaps they did, for before many hours had passed we were joining a rendezvous of many, many great Sea Dragons upon the dark bottom of the North Atlantic.

CHAPTER VII

AS far as penetray vision could reach—thirty to sixty miles, according to the density of surrounding material—lay the war-fleet the Sea People had gathered together for this attempt upon Hecate. Ever the lights revealed another great ship sinking through the gray surface overhead, down and down to lie beside the others, while orders and tactical discussions flashed between the finny officers of the great ships.²

All these exchanges of thought around me concerning the coming attack were but Greek to me, and after a half hour of such rapid exchange of orders and the information of Hecate's position, the fleet began to move. I suspected this was the end of Hecate, for though the Sea People were practically untried in battle, I could see no weak-

ness in them.

But in truth they were like the amateur Firpo—a giant—but no match for the experienced Dempsey. Unless perhaps we could land such a blow immediately as knocked Dempsey from the ring.

I kept thinking of the encounter as I had seen it in the newsreels, and Oltissa noticed my meaning. She swam swiftly past me, saying, "I will discuss your suggestion with the chief. And I want to say that I approve of you, somehow, in spite of your revolting love affairs." Her laugh wafted backward to me, and I cursed. I liked her, but she *would* laugh at me.

THE fleet began the attack from a vast range. It is always difficult for ray of a portable nature to attack a permanent installation. The massive work of the ancients, built for the ages, was always vastly more powerful than anything that could be moved. The answer, of course, is a great number of units, lined up to send a simultaneous ray of combined power against a single point. But the combined power of all the portable units is seldom enough to outmass the tremendous defenses built by the ancients, who had a weakness for defense in preference to offensive weapons, being, I suspect, not addicted to aggression.

Our combined fire from several hundred ships, as nearly as I could estimate, seemed to affect the great black screens of force globing the bottom below and ahead of us, not at all. Somewhere, perhaps miles under the rock of the bottom, lay this last refuge of the hated vampire. I began to doubt even the Sea People's ability to take the place, for they seemed to know little of Hecate's strength. It was possible, I realized, that these seemingly powerful people were not so effective at war.

² The Sea People's warships ran from three hundred to five hundred feet in length. Some were antique, some were modern copies of the antique designs. They were not slender, as the awful power of the antique drive did not cause so much need for streamlining. Being an homogeneous people and having experienced little war in their history, they had no great need for speed under water. The antique ship they used as model for their craft was primarily a space ship; all their craft were submersible space ships, equipped for air, water, or space travel. They had no landing equipment for landing on terra firma, always coming to a landing in the water, diving deep into the seas to take up their momentum by the buoyancy against the pressure of the depths. I suspect that when men take up space travel, this method of landing will be found the only convenient one for a ship equipped for space. It does away with all need for super-strong units for wheels, skids, etc., reinforcing of such units—needing only a normally strong hull able to take pressure at all points.

Anyway, they went at it hammer and tongs, from a good safe distance. Hecate couldn't do a lot of shooting without letting down her screens—and she wouldn't do that till she knew just what the finny boys had. But she did throw some powerful stuff right through her own shorter, hoping on blind chance to make a few hits while she tested our strength on the shorter meters. I wondered if the Sea People weren't playing right into her hands by throwing everything they had against her shorter fans, hoping to blow them out, while all they would accomplish would be to give Hecate a good idea of their fire-power on her volt-amp meters—or the antique equivalent.

The fireworks went on for maybe twenty minutes, without anybody seeming to get anywhere. I dragged my helmet-weighted body through the water, while the mermen darted about me like fiends serving some finny devil of a ruler. It was difficult for me to peer out the ports, for they were not set for a man of my height, but put at various levels for the fishermen. I wished heartily for the feel of a good big ray-cannon under my hands. I wanted to take a sight at that black cloud of evil life below; but though the Sea People's officers must have noticed my thought, no one obligingly gave up his place at the firing levers.

Hecate must have us pretty well figured out by now, I thought. Then out from under the hiding cloud of black shorter and muddy red clouds of swirling muck from the bottom that the force flows had disturbed, came trundling a line of great undersea tanks. As soon as they cleared the shorter ray limits, they began to blaze away at us with plain old dis-rays, and the water filled with steam bubbles from the disintegration heat as well as gas bubbles of hydrogen, oxygen and chlorine.

THEN fate gave me a hand in the battle. Those tanks were manned by Hecate's old time Spaniards, not new to ray fighting, and the dis-needles knocked off the whole crew of the gun nearest my port. I hopped down from the great lounge I had stood on to peer out the port, and crawled over onto the firing seat of the ray-cannon.

It was a dissociator, which differs somewhat from a dis-ray, in that the latter causes gout of fire wherever it strikes, as well as along the ray path. A dissociator is a vibrant that unlocks the tiny magnetic charges that are the little hands that hold matter together, so that matter melts and turns to nothing—a soft mushy stuff that disappears like thick smoke after a time; but it does not start real disintegration of the fiery kind that is nature's own disintegration.

I got a line on the head tank and let go, but that tank just didn't melt away and disappear. What was the matter? Evidently the Hag had equipped the tanks with a damper ray—an all over protective field that was designed to dampen and neutralize just the type of dissociator vibrant we were using. The fire of the Sea People wasn't doing any good, and our ships were backing away from the fierce ray needles of the antique Spaniards of Hecate's. I knew that our crews must be decimated, from the bodies floating about me in the water. There was no particular reason that this ship should have been hit harder than the others.

I knew what to do, from my long tutelage under Hecate herself. I threw open the clamps on the gun cover, took out the big coils, and rearranged them in a new sequence of tortion. I would have to keep changing the atunement of the dissociator until I hit a frequency that was effective, yet not dampened by her protective vibrants.

Half a dozen times I changed the line-up of the coils, cussing steadily because there was not a supply of coils of various alignments ready alongside the gun, as there should have been. I didn't realize that this was just a sample of what the Sea People had overlooked in their inexperience. They underestimated the Hag. They thought her no scientist. Well, Hecate had her faults, as numerous as barnacles on a derelict, but lack of study in her immense past was certainly not one of those faults.

I had to guess at the proper alignment of the tortion coils, and some of my changes probably wouldn't have hurt a flea. But sooner or later I would hit one that would penetrate her damp-er rays. On the seventh try, the big tank that was trundling now almost under our hull and raking us fore and aft with general-dispersion needles, began to turn into soft glue wherever I touched her. She stopped, her treads ceased to churn up the mass of ooze under her, and the whole top of the tank caved slowly in under the pressure of the mile of water overhead. One down, and a few hundred to go.

I did not realize I was fighting from a dead ship, that I was the only man alive on the ship. But that was the case. Oltissa came zig-zagging through the water to my side, dragging one maimed limb behind her. "Hogan, we are the only ones left on this ship. What the devil has happened to everyone?"

"I don't know what you people think of Hecate, but I don't think you will laugh at her again. You practically ignored me, who knows more about Hecate's mind than any man alive, and walk into the worst defeat Hecate ever handed out to anybody. Now get into the control chamber and take this ship where I tell you; maybe I can save a little from the mess."

THE cannon were connected with the control chambers by a telaug hookup, and getting into the master's seat, Oltissa navigated the ship wherever my thought indicated. We circled slowly around the lumbering tanks, at extreme range, and I kept the huge ray-point steady on the whole line-up as we circled. As tank after tank folded up, weakened by the dissociator till the water pressure completed the job, the whole formation turned and beat a rumbling retreat. The mass of ooze they stirred up as they converged upon the point in the shorter cloud where they had emerged, hid them effectively from my sights. Keeping the cannon pointed on the approximate place in the cloud of mud and shorter rays where I thought they must all pass to enter, I waited till the last one had disappeared. Then I told Oltissa to get the attackers to withdraw, I had something to say.

Out of several hundreds of ships, with which we had come down on Hecate, only about one hundred and fifty were able to withdraw. The rest were settled to the bottom behind us, empty of life, or unable to proceed under their own power.

I left the cannon, staggered into the control chamber, angry and pretty near exhausted from pressure and strenuous effort. I pointed 'Up' to Oltissa, who drove the ship upward at a speed that brought me to my knees in the agony of the bends.

Oltissa stopped the ship and the rest of our battered armada gathered slowly around us. Still on my knees, I reached over and flipped the ship communicator lever. On the screen the face of the master of the nearest ship appeared, a face that reflected the agonized desperation of defeat. I shouted in my own language, knowing that the basic thought would be conveyed anyway:

"You people have got to listen to me,

or you will never get anywhere. From now on listen to me!"

CHAPTER VIII

NOW I had them where I wanted them—ready to listen. I put a crew at work changing the great dissociator rifle-cannon into variable pitch rayguns, and installed beside each cannon a rack of coils in sets so that changes in the atunement of the dissociator rays could be accomplished with a simple removal and replacement of one set of coils—a matter of two seconds' work. Over and over I emphasized their disregard for ordinary forethought of battle emergencies that had failed to allow for damping rays from Hecate's defense.

The dis-cannon were likewise worked on, and some of the adjustments I had learned from Hecate were installed to increase the range by fining the focus to a narrower beam and installing heavier conductive metal so that the guns could be fired in rotation with the full power of the whole ship's dynamos, instead of as they were now hooked up, a broadside, lowering the effective power of each gun by lowering the flow of current.

Besides this, I had noticed their tactics were not carefully thought out—or they had not learned from seeing similar conflicts. I outlined a course of tactics where the whole fleet maneuvered as a single unit, firing over each other in a row. This caused the ionization of the beams to cut resistance for the next beam, so that the concentric simultaneous beam of the whole fleet's firepower might be directed along on beam path only. The result of this combined beam would be disastrous and probably greater than anything of a non-portable nature the Hag might have.

In effect I gave them three new and vastly more powerful weapons, out of their same equipment, simply because I had the experience they had not had. In addition I suggested that, simultaneous with our attack, a telesolidograph projection of several ships around each ship of ours would, over the whole expanse of the fleet, give an effect of tripling the enemy targets and decrease the fire we would sustain by two-thirds or more for the first few moments of battle.

The first half dozen newly fitted ships I dispatched to retrieve the battle ships we had left behind in our retreat, if Hecate had not already done just that. They drove off several tanks engaged in towing the big empty hulks into Hecate's hole under the sea, and set to work towing them back to our own rendezvous. But they lost a crew in the engagement. All but three of the disabled vessels were recovered.

The work occupied several weeks, and during that time a fleet of fifty ships arrived from the Seas of Venus to reinforce our strength. Nearly a month had passed before I decided that everything I could do for them had been done. I told them to go ahead. If they failed, there was nothing I could do about it.

WE advanced on the target, which was, as before, just a great black cloud of shorter fans projecting upward from the sea bottom. The sea growths had mostly been blasted away by the previous attack, and here and there in the deep ooze crisscrossed the great sunken furrows made by Hecate's sub tanks.

Following my suggestion without reservation, the finned commander of our fan-tailed legions lined his fleet in a solid phalanx, firing over a simultaneous beam of combined power be-

fore he ever reached the range. A tremendous gulf was blasted into the bottom of the sea as we proceeded nearer and nearer toward the great black cloud that was all we could see of Hecate's fortress.

As the tremendous power of our combined fire beam struck into this cloud of protective conductive, a series of shocks shook the water about us and great clouds of ooze shot upward, obscuring everything. I turned to my telaug communicator and shouted to the commander—"Turn on the solidographs; those were the screens burning out—they'll come out shooting!"

About us sprang in sight a series of other ships like our own—mere projections, but so real they would fool anyone at a distance of three feet. Now all about us lay a dozen other fleets, in variant formations. It would be impossible to tell whether one was shooting at a real ship or a false one. In and out the operators wove the unreal ships with the real, while all the while our fleet fanned out wider and wider, in staggered formation to avoid the fire we expected. But it didn't come.

Just out of range of actual visual sight over our visi-rays, I saw a series of scuttling shadows. Pointing them out to Oltissa, I asked her what they meant.

"The old vampire's taking a sneak!—" and Oltissa snapped the information to the fleet commander.

After the shadows streaked a dozen of our ships, but the rest of the fleet lined up in firing order again, and with a combined beam of destructiveness blasted the position where the first explosions of burning-out shorter had occurred. A great whirlpool formed in the swirling mud and water as the sea rushed into the mighty caverns below the soil. As this maelstrom subsided, one by one we shot into the opening and

entered the water-filled caves below to see for ourselves that Hecate had really fled. This idea, however, seemed unwise to me.

IT was, verily, the home of Neptune himself that Hecate had chosen for her hiding place. On every side stretched the tremendous enigmatic machines and tall sculptured handiwork of the ancient sea people—the original dwellers in earth's oceans. Some of them were representatives of a people somewhat like my present friends of Venusian origin, but for the most part they were of a race I had never seen pictured before. The vast spaces of time that had passed since the mother of life first spawned the race of these statues—the awful weight of infinitudes of eons of past time—rested on one in here with a more sensible pressure than the miles of water overhead.

Cautiously we stole along the cyclopean corridors of green-lit water—and the surprised goggle-eyes of the fishes let in from the sea bottom stared back at us and at the mystery of ancient timeless beauty that was the work of immortals about the caverns. A writhing squid trailed himself across our bow plates, his tentacles jerking convulsively as he grasped at the slippery surface where our view rays played ahead—seeing the greatness that once was ecstatic life and infinite wisdom's home, and now was the last desperate retreat of the Mother of Sin, the hideous immortal. Somewhere she fled, or lay in wait for us with some devilish gin of her devising—and I shuddered, for I knew the tortuous cunning of her mind patterns, to which even all my intimate experience with her thought had not given me the key. I shuddered with fear for what she had prepared for this foolhardy entry of ours into her lair.

Even as I communicated my fears to Motora over Oltissa's telaug, a blast shattered the darkness behind us into roaring deluges of sound, a catastrophe—terrible crash of explosive in water that lay the merpeople in quivering helplessness at their posts—and when my senses came again to use—behind us the way had closed. Within our ears came the telaug rays of the Hag, hearing her evilly mocking voice—"Proceed—go ahead—drive on—whichever path you choose now is death—go on."

I shouted at Oltissa: "Speed,—full speed ahead is your only chance—you may beat the trap ahead before it lets go. Do as she says; she tries to delay you till they close the caverns ahead."

Naturally Hecate would tell us to go ahead if she wanted us to wait—for naturally we would not expect her to give us a key to the way out of the trap we had stepped into.

The drivers roared as the half-stunned mermen leaped to the controls, and about us the blast of force from the drivers of our fellow ships reverberated from the walls—and on we drove at suicidal speed. The cavern walls narrowed. We slowed to negotiate the tortuous turns ahead—and a mighty tornado of powerful blasts unleashed titanic forces ahead of us as the rocks swayed and crashed about us.

AS the terrible sounds died out and the echoes swung at last to rest, we lay locked within Hecate's power by our own foolhardiness in failing to expect subterfuge. I had been thinking all was safe in the hands of the Sea People—but a noble brow and cultured manner is never a criterion of behaviour under the press of such circumstances as occur not in cultured surroundings. They had not thought of a subterfuge, for the ways of evil were strange ways to them. The great, good

men of life are so often blind in just that way—and the Sea People were not different.

Within our ears bellowed laughter from dozens of watching penetrative rays from Hecate's cohorts—watching our minds in our extremity and laughing at the death thought in our heads. We all knew we had not long to live.

"Start the pumps!" We could hear the fearful, witch-woman voice of Hecate give the order—and a dozen boils of water about us told us the caverns were equipped to get rid of water when needed. Shortly we lay, dry and helpless, and nowhere in range of our ray could we find any enemy, but only black fans of obscuring shorter ray in the distance, at which we fired without result. We were captives—the captives of Hecate—and we knew we had but a few hours at most to live—and that living we knew would not be pleasant.

CHAPTER IX

THE merpeople sealed off the water inlets and outlets of the ships. I looked down the line and counted twenty ships before the curve of the cavern walls obscured the rest. I turned to Oltissa. "How many ships were ordered in here?"

"Thirty," she answered shortly, and somehow I knew she thought I should have forewarned them somehow for such an obvious trick.

"Oltissa—I was not watching; I trust your intelligence too much; I admire you Sea People—and forget you do not think in terms of battle and ruse and such shifts of thought as are habitual to Hecate and her crew."

"It is no time to be sorry. If it had been your decision to make—you would not have driven ships into this trap—would you? It is our fault for not put-

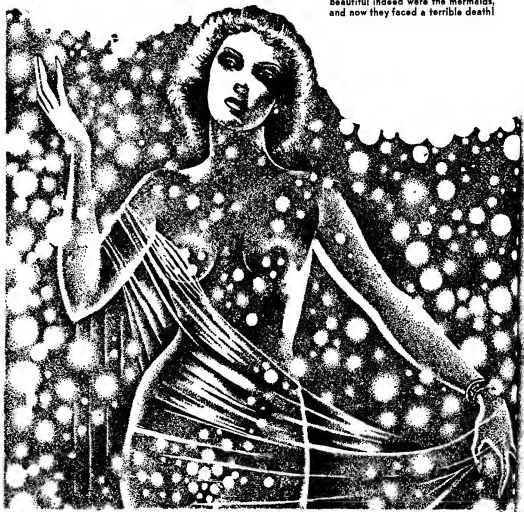
ting you where such decision would have been up to you. But—what do you think will happen to us—?”

“Slow death at the hands of her torturers—or worse, to become robot slaves in some work house of hers—there is no knowing what—but it will not be fun.”

It wasn't. As I looked at Oltissa, waiting for the death she had no idea how to avoid, a tremendous sorrow and

an admiration for the qualities of her people came over me. Her crest, erect and quivering, her wide scarlet mouth, her nostrils palpitant with the quick nervous drafts of greenish water, the long white column of her tapered, sinuous throat, twisting slowly as if looking, looking for a way out that there was no use to look for, but could not help; the great long-fingered, webbed hands, wrung now in tortuous indecision, the

Beautiful indeed were the mermaids,
and now they faced a terrible death!



great water-emerald eyes, so full of humanity and fierce prideful thought, the great sculptured torso of her, with the perfect breasts and the slim, long waist that carried her so beautifully in the water, the hips that were as no human's hips, yet were so perfect for her, flowing into the green mottled power of her thighs—all the admiration that man can have for perfect woman flooded in me and tears came unbidden to my eyes. I knew that no beauty like hers would long exist within sight of Hecate, who hated woman's beauty as she hated no other thing. Her awful age-old hideousness that yet had longed for immortal beauty, had its own terrible pride in the power of her evil strength, that gave life to her dead-alive body.

As I looked thus at Oltissa, I felt a warmth begin to grow within me, and peered out the visi-screen window through the solid metal of the wall. Far off, from under the black power-screens that hid Hecate's strength from our eyes, came toward us two great gleaming rays of power, and ended—one each at the end of our ship. Under the terrific power of the current in those two conductive beams, the rock was turning red in the distance, and within the ship, at the ends where the rays impinged, the water was filling rapidly with bubbles of vapor.

I wondered—and then her plan struck me in its hideous fullness. She planned to boil the water inside the ships till all life within was gone. It was the safest and quickest way. And then she could open the ends of the tunnel and wait for a new victim to drive in to see what had become of his comrades. With luck she could thus trap another group of merpeople.

TO BE boiled alive was to be the fate of all of us. Even as the truth struck me, it came over Oltissa's noble

face, with a storm of anger and awful striving of her mind for an opening in the walls of circumstance closing about her life. Her hands twisted and twisted as the water heated about her, and her nostrils panted quicker and quicker with the struggle of her mind to face death fully. Then, as the water became less supporting of life under the heating, she gasped to me—"Get within your tank of air; the heat will not harm you in the air—air is not a good heat conductor. You may live when we are dead—and once we are dead she will turn off the rays. You may fall into her hands, yes—but you will live."

I looked long at her, and ever the bubbles of steam formed about us and rose, and there was no use to move, no need for effort to live now—for life was done.

"No, my friend, the beautiful and noble Oltissa; I do not care so much for life under Hecate. It seems to me that death were the best thing that could happen to me. After all, Oltissa, Hecate is the ugliest woman in two worlds—or under them. I think I had better just die, and have it over with."

A smile struggled swiftly over her gasping face, and the great strength that is the Sea People's rippled down her smoothly muscled form, paused at the great driving thighs, and leaped into action as she grasped me by the arms and swam backward with me to the door of the air tank where they had prepared me for my visit to my unwanted mistress. She swung the door open, and it clanged shut behind me with a finality as she shot the dogs about the door into place and clamped them there. She turned on the pump that emptied the tank of water, and as I peered out at her she pressed her lips to the glass in one last sweet gesture of womanhood. I kissed the glass where her lips rested and tried to tell her with

my thought that I knew there existed under our sun no nobler child of the ancient goodness called the Gods, but I know not whether she heard. As the heat increased, I watched the long bodies of the mighty sea race swell and bloat and die, and my admiration for them was not decreased by the way they met death.

CHAPTER X

FOR a long time I stood alone within the death-filled Sea Dragon, peering out of my window upon the green water filled with the once lovely forms of a people in many ways far superior to any others I had known. Now their dead bodies floated, bloated white bellies up, long hands so expressive in their supine waving in the slow drift of the bubbling, heated water. Expressive of the horror and the wrong of all killing. For nothing the Hag could ever gain would be worth so much real value as just one of these merpeople—had she been worthy of them as friends, instead of so horrible a vampire that no sane life could be her friend. What false values must lie in her brain, to seem greater than to call one of these noble mer-race a friend.

Then the heat ceased to bubble its path through the water, and outside I could hear the hammering of workmen making an entrance through the sealed locks. I sank half kneeling in weakness from the terrible heat, as through the opened locks the light sprang and the heated water rushed away, bearing with it some of the long, still lovely bodies of merwomen.

As the water disappeared, through the openings came the horse-faced antique Spaniards of Hecate's crew of blood-suckers. Peering into my tank, they saw my dewed, gasping face, and emitted loud laughs to find the man

they hated and envied—"Big Steel" himself—so near death. A particular aversion of mine, one Juan de Sadalo, his face even more hideously wrinkled than his centuries of stolen life had made it, shouted to the others as he laughed in triumph to find me in his hands—"I say finish him off now, while we have the chance—and tell our ruler that Steel was dead when we arrived."

Beside him, also sneering at me, was one who had been Hecate's chief delight before my advent, a man who had kept somewhat of his looks through I do not know how many years, one Cronguelin, a Frenchman. "You might be a bit hasty, Juan; the rays who watch us may not all be so inclined as to keep their tongues in their mouths. And there is always the chance that she will read your mind one day when you are not thinking of her, and what would she do to you—to find you had killed her sweet thing, Monsieur Steel? No, let the big fellow live. Mayhap when Hecate tires of him, we will find the opportunity to kill him slowly."

The debate was cut short by the arrival of Hecate herself, and I was almost glad to see the hideous leech. Such is flesh, when the mind loses control—a thing of no reason at all. And Hecate had replaced my natural self-control within her own devising.

Hecate came in, striding, powerful, her tall, wide rockgrey form half naked as it always was; her locks wild and black as I remembered them. She found me in the tank, half cooked and choking in the foul air while her men stood about and taunted me.

"You know who the man is, and you can stand there and let him die!" Hecate's ever swift rage mounted visibly into her face. "Do my wishes mean nothing to you, after all the time I have taught you that my will is your will, or your death?"

She shot two of them where they stood, and the others, with wondering faces, busied themselves about releasing me, as though they had not known I was there. For they had learned to pretend, even with their thoughts, in the centuries of slavery to the anger and swift death that Hecate was to those who failed to know what their duty was, as she saw duty.

SO IT was that I found the great Hecate bending over me, her great yellow fangs bared in a grimace of concern. And the dream I had had of falling into her hands came true in her arms.

The deep sorrow which the death of the noble and intelligent friends I had made among the merpeople aroused, was strong in me as I walked beside Hecate to the antique rollat car in which she had come. Thirty miles we drove, nearly in silence, the extreme range where she had lain to spring this trap on the finny merpeople. A grim smile of triumph on her face, she had paid little attention to me during the drive. I busied my mind with swift repair and rearrangement of my conceptional set-up, so that in the mental going-over soon to come, she would not find me too much an enemy. To learn to disguise his inner thought is the most difficult thing a surface man can do, but I had learned the trick the hard way, and I could lie most convincingly with my thought if I had a chance to get set. I would have plenty of chance to exercise my acquired skill in the future. I brushed away my sorrowful thought of the lost Amazon, Ceulna, that dancing, fiery Venusian who had decided I was her love. I had found she was wholly right: no earthman can resist the beauty of the White Amazons of Tuon of Venus, particularly one trained in the erotic dances of that sensuous

people. Well, no good to think of that: I was again the thing of Hecate's.

Things went much as they had in the dream. Hecate sank into her place in the great crystal nest which had once been the throne of some mighty immortal of the past. She swung the telaug beams onto my head and breast, and swiftly went over me, getting much nearer the truth of my thoughts for the past few years than I cared her to. Then she put me to sleep with a great black flood of sleeper ray, and when I awoke I was alone in a chamber, and my mind was again a thing not my own, but waiting to hear the thought of Hecate before it had will to act. Then I knew it would spring into fierce activity to perform her will, no matter how revolting her demands might be. Within my veins I felt the new access of young strength that meant she had given me an infusion of baby's blood as well. Evidently fate had decreed me to me a monster, no matter how.

DAYS passed, and the old routine of my servitude to her horrendous majesty's pleasure became the way of my life. With watching augments I transferred to her mind the thoughts of her followers when they might interest her, and with super-stim rays I pleased her body when she desired it. I was her watch-dog, her hypnotized right hand man, whose will was only a male repetition of her own. I was, as well, her paramour, whose desires and affections, every emotion naturally considered the private property of one's own breast, rose and fell in exact accord with her will. There is no describing the servitude of the soul that can be attained with the mighty intricacy of the old mechanical aids of the body's electrical machinery. It can only be understood when experienced.

Days lengthened into weeks, and out

of the dark water that pressed down forever on this endless cavern beneath the North Atlantic, came no fleet of battle spacers of the Sea People, flaming into battle to avenge their dead. They seemed to have had enough of Hecate's brand of war for awhile.

Occasionally Hecate's men came back from a foray sailing one of the Sea People's ships, with captives in chains in water-filled compartments. What they did with them is a picture of piteous horror I cannot bring myself to describe. Such creatures as Hecate's followers plague men since the dawn of time, but their existence seems to prove to me that there is no God conscious of affairs on this earth. But then I know it, for have I not seen the homes of the God races of the past, and then seen these latter-day monsters wallowing through them in their bloated evil pride? No, the Gods do not know what has taken up life in their former dwellings.

Ever in my nose was the scent of the blood of some tormented creature or other. Always in my sleep the memory of the deeds of that sadistic crew strove and struggled with the dead soul of me, to wake and strike, to wake and crush the nest of adders before the whole earth had become the footstool of Hecate. For daily, from some dark hell of space she had contacted, new recruits came in, to be examined by Hecate's women, by me, and in the case of officers, by herself. For Hecate had no lack of gold—or its equivalent, the intricate super-stim mech of the ancient art. There is no value of gold or gems or human flesh that can compare with some of the more intricate art of these long-gone immortals in value. And in Hecate's centuries of evil aggression under the rocks of Mother Earth, many and many were the people who had failed to hold her fighting men—who

had failed to check her swift, flaming advance. Through the centuries these secret caches of the immortal Hecate had grown. Swiftly her strength grew now, as she bartered the baubles that men desire for good flesh and blood and hard labor—for slaves and warriors and the ancient hulks that form the base on which the modern space fighters are rebuilt.

And in the dead and secret place that yet remained to me of my self's private hopes, a tiny voice cried—"Pray the Elder Gods the Sea People are building, too."

CHAPTER XI

PERHAPS I had better give you a picture of the principal crew of Hecate's ship, which was to lead the attack on the Sea People when we were fully ready. Immediately behind Hecate where she sat at the flagship's intricate panels of communicators keyed to each ship of the fleet, stood her chief advisor and confidante, a square-spectacled blood-taker of an ancient aspect. His appearance was that of some cruel Spanish lord of the time of the inquisition, whose embalmed body had been brought back to life to bedevil mankind again. His great hooked beak, swarthy long-chinned face, and the square antique spectacles, giving him a curiously scholarly look, together with the sinister twist of his full drooping mouth, all united to give an impression of ruthless will—but a will so steeped in centuries of indulgence as to be not a human will, but an automaton of selfishness. About his great form (all these ancient blood-takers of Hecate's intimate group were extremely large, as the centuries through which they survived by transfusions of the blood of infants, gave them life and growth) were the antique Spanish corselet and puffed

sleeves, on his legs the puffed breeches and long hip-high stockings of the time of the conquistadors. Instead of the ancient sword one automatically looked for at his thigh, hung a huge hand weapon, once the property of some son of Zeus or Jupiter, now his personal weapon these many years. It was a ray pistol, a long oval about a foot in length, with intricately worked metal handle of the pistol type, but massive, made to fit a mighty hand such as no longer exists under our sun.

Immediately at his right stood another Spaniard, but a type now almost forgotten—the priest of the medieval Rosicrucians. A long-cowled scarlet and gold robe covered his massive, well-fleshed form. His long face was a mass of wrinkles, a mummy's face suffused with the bright pink of children's blood. His bright black eyes glittered with a strange lust for blood as he peered at the motile map, a new thing to him. Likewise they glittered with a lust to kill as they looked at me, standing by the side of Hecate watching them all, and hoping for a chance to get rid of one of them by catching him in opposition to Hecate's plans.

Each of us held this watchful thought, planted in our minds by Hecate's arts, and watched each other for some thing that would prove the other not loyal in his inner thoughts. But among those accustomed to the inner circles of Hecate's organization, such thoughts did not occur; they were too expensive; and too they could not occur after Hecate's skillful fingers had finished their work upon the brain center's connecting nerves, isolating those centers most apt to cause trouble by emotional revolt. After Hecate had cut the nerves of the brain, one was not apt to think of revolt, for the fiery needles of cutting ray left no part of the brain functioning but those parts she

understood were purely utilitarian.

Hecate did the planning, we did the development and carrying out of the plans. Capability to originate plans was not left in our brains. If by accident it might occur, she left a hypnotic charge impressed on our memories and will to watch ever for plans adverse to her own in all the minds at hand. And so, like automatons, we watched each other's thought, and remembered carefully whether or not the other was one of Hecate's hands or a tool apt to cut two ways. The reward for such information was the endless floods of pleasure rays which Hecate alone could release upon one; the very flesh played stoolpigeon in anticipation of the great God's delight from her hands.

BEHIND we three and Hecate, stood six other men, wrinkled, old-young devils for the most part, though one was a physicist and a graduate of Rensselaer Polytech many years ago. He was a tall, ascetic looking man, of a suave, deadly slimness, a suit of the ancient ray armor from the cavern armories sheathing his slim limbs, its gleaming, black polished surface setting off his sinuous, graceful figure to the utmost. About his waist hung one of the antique weapons, a weapon of a kind I had never seen used. It was a long slender rod wrapped about with silver spirals of heavy wire. One was apt to run into strange characters and stranger weapons in the groups that held the far-spread cavern cities. Where this man came by the experience and wit to make himself so valuable to Hecate, I did not know. He kept to himself, and his counsel was sought by few other than Hecate. I knew he must be a brilliant man, for Hecate knew the mind as none other I ever met.

Hecate's evil nature was not due to

lack of wit, but to an inner lust for violence that overthrew her logic at frequent and terrible intervals, and during these periods of fury those who knew her kept their distance, and those who didn't died. Even when her inner fires were banked, they looked fiercely out of her ancient yellow eyes, and none could look into her eyes at any time without sensing the deadly struggle ever being fought within her between her own will and some demon that possessed her. So it was that Hecate could plan and build and weld the wills of men to her ambition's chariot wheels; but all would be torn down as her reason surrendered to lust for violence, and hetacombs of men and women must die before her to assuage the demon that lived in her.

Myself, knowing her well, had calculated the keys and reasonings that set her off on death's trail or brought her back to reason's sway again, but could not really understand what she might do next. My own theory was that the radioactives that cause age had not been defeated by her method of fighting age with the transfused blood of children from her child-farms—her nurseries for her young blood-cows; but that a great amount of the stuff that makes others age had accumulated through the centuries within her body. This radioactive material from the sun, as I had learned it from reading her mind in unguarded moments, seemed to accumulate a charge of electric within her body, of detrimental electric, which at times overwhelmed her natural will with flows of destructive electric which to her mind resembled thought, but to which her mind could not help but respond as to a destructive will. In truth it *was* destructive will, and her great age had made her less and less able to hold this will to destroy in abeyance. The least excitement or untoward ac-

tivity was apt to release the accumulation of emanation from the radioactives in her body into a flood of destroying electric through her great strong body and elder-wise mind.

She knew all this, but was unable to combat the thing. So it was that life with Hecate was made up of periods of comparative calm, weighted always with apprehension that something would touch her off, and blood would flow in streams before she ridded herself her body of the alien, horrible will of the detrimental electric. So she seemed possessed of a devil because she was—a greater devil than any other, because she was older than any other. I often wondered if all evil people were not activated by the same detrimental accumulation of emanation from the radioactives in their body, and its different aspects in character dependent entirely on which areas of the brain happened to be weakest and hence most affected by the alien will-force which the detrimental electric stimulates so well.

THEY were a motley and terrible crew, these intimates of Hecate, but they were in truth, like myself, not so much people or personalities as manufactured tools of Hecate's mind, without real character of their own. Like myself, they probably had plenty of character in abeyance, but only beneficial ray treatment or years of healing of the connecting nerves between the intricate parts of the brain which determine the character would free them from their domination by Hecate's will-to-evil. In the case of the Spaniards some of whom were nearly as old in evil as Hecate herself, I knew that within them the soul had died, the ego withered away, and that naught was left but a few insatiable appetites and the mechanisms for thought keyed to

serve Hecate's expressed thought exclusively. I realized that to some extent this mind-crippling of Hecate's was crippling the flexibility and emergency-response reaction of the organization as a whole; but Hecate knew this too, and had weighed the matter and decided the safer way was the better way. In her case, where all men were moved to hate upon their first contact with her, she was probably right. I know that I would have killed her at any time after I had known her for a few days, had I been able, but instead my whole will served her thought in place of my inner mind's promptings.

CHAPTER XII

AT last the day came when Hecate led forth a great fleet of fighting ships and men to scour earth clean of the Sea People, and make at least the oceans of earth her own. Hecate was not content with any power, but always strove to grasp a greater hold of life and of the things that it can give flesh, in the caverns. Eventually she planned to find the uttermost secrets of the antique wisdom, but meanwhile there was fighting—and I knew for her there would be fighting always till she died. The other was but her dream, the fighting was her life.

Beside her in the great ship that led the long, shadowy, fish-like dragons of war across the green slopes of the sea, I watched constantly for any signs of the Sea People. I had installed, from the wrecked and captured ships, the motile maps of electrified sand, of Venusian invention, which was a device not heretofore used by air-breathers.

Presently I caught a glimpse of a hull in the distance on the sand screen map. Hecate held up three fingers as I pointed out the object, and I gave

orders over the telemachs for three ships to leave formation and follow the fleeing Sea People's ship.

The sub was limping along very slowly, as if crippled. As our three left the fleet to pursue, the distant shadow of the ship picked up speed and disappeared in the dark water. I wondered vaguely what could be wrong with the ship. But it was not my business to think, I was a tool. Crippled or sailing slowly? my mind questioned. I remembered the ship had been sailing erratically, in a foolish kind of zig-zag, as if the rudder was out of commission, yet as our three bore down on her she had suddenly righted her course and sped away, just out of range. My mind dropped the subject, and I turned to other matters.

About thirty minutes later the three ships rejoined our fleet. Watching them approach, I saw beyond them and far off to the west, another crippled ship, lying nose down almost vertically on end. I sent a ship to investigate, but as the ship I dispatched neared the apparently wrecked submersible, she pulled her nose up out of the mud and sped off. I felt alarm; the coincidence of the sudden flight made me suspect a trap of some kind—but how could that be? I beamed the three ships now jockeying into position into the formation.

"What ship was that? Did she resist?"

"She was the 'Onspi' of the Sea People's. We shot her to bits. No one escaped."

"Did you get any information from their minds?"

"Couldn't get a thing, she had her screens up."

Feeling peculiarly elated about something odd in the air, and a subconscious feeling of despair lifting from inside me, I still could not consciously coordinate

the coincidence of two crippled ships being able to flee when attacked, with anything in the nature of danger for us. It is a peculiar state of mind to be in, to be doing consciously what one's whole self hates and abhors, yet be unable to do otherwise or think differently. A mind slave is not a happy person. Yet consciously, to myself, I was perfectly at ease and on my toes. Hecate was an artist of the mind; she could do anything to a mind and get what she wanted out of it; and what she wanted was the perfect tool.

I SENT two more after the one pursuing the strange sub disappearing in the far range of the sand map's coverage. No use taking chances.

The three reappeared in about the same time the first three had, and made the same report. The fleet of the Hag sailed on its bloody mission, some five hundred strong, toward its destination, a colony of merpeople in the South Atlantic.

Then Hell broke loose! I had noticed that the crew of the three ships rejoining us had seemed a bit queer, but had not consciously taken full notice of my reactions. But there were now six ships among us who had been out of our sight for not more than thirty minutes. Suddenly these six ships began firing upon us and driving forward into the thickest concentration of ships in our huge double V formation. They weren't firing all their guns, just the master ray that is always fixed in the bow of these antique ships, and is aimed by pointing the ship at the target. They were firing as if manned by one person, and that person a suicidal enemy bent upon our destruction at the cost of his own. Our return fire flooded the foremost of these suddenly berserk subs with dis-ray, but no screens went up to stop the fire. There wasn't much time

to figure why, for—Barr-rrrooom!—the ship exploded in a blast that shattered a dozen of our nearest battle-dragons and sent another dozen nosing toward the bottom with broken hulls.

Instead of understanding what had happened, easing fire and fleeing the oncoming death—our ships for the most part kept on firing on the others—and two more of these traitorous sub-boats went up—taking twenty or thirty of our now scattered formation with them to death.

I leaped to the inter-ship telaug and ordered immediate flight from the remaining rebels—for I suddenly understood what had happened. The Sea People had devised a trick of their own, enticed our ships out of sight, annihilated the crews, loaded the ships with explosives and sent them back into the fleet with a single suicide seaman at the controls. Evidently they had left the dead bodies in their places, propping them up as if alive. It had been good enough to escape our observation for a while—long enough for the one man crews to go into action.

Their trick had cost us near a hundred of our fleet; one of the subs had exploded far enough from other ships to harm nothing, and there were two more to explode should they be hit. These super depth-bombs were the deadliest device I had seen used under-seas as yet. They must have some Tuon male warriors with them, for the suicide helmsmen were four-limbed air-breathers. At the thought my heart leaped. If the Tuon forces had joined the Sea People, mayhap Ceulna was near. I smothered the thought just in time, for Hecate looked up from her desperate preoccupation with the sudden disaster, to see the flame of hope in my face. But the moment passed without her otherwise-intent mind taking note of my disaffection.

HECATE'S opposition, in the invisible distance, seemed to have learned something about war since their ignominious defeat in their other encounters, I reflected. They didn't give us a chance to figure what came next—they threw it at us.

Into sight loomed a fantastic aggregation of variously formed ships, and Hecate let out a snort of disgust, for the heterogeneous collection of under-sea ships bearing down on us gave no indication of the talented and powerful work of the Sea People. As they drew within range, their scattered, unmilitary formation, their likewise scattered and ineffective fire upon us, gave us all a feeling of complete confidence in victory over this disorganized enemy. I had thought much better of the Sea People, myself.

As they drew nearer, we let go a broadside that I fully expected to knock the whole opposition out of the water. It did, but not in the way I had expected. Our fire started something that no immortal, no aggregation of minds that ever lived on earth, could have survived. The first ship struck by our fire went up, exploding with a shattering force, causing our whole fleet to lurch backward in the water. But the rest of the oncoming fleet, like a string of firecrackers, let go one after the other, in calculated intervals, and at the mounting series of cataclysmic explosive force upon my body, I collapsed, passing into unconsciousness. My last picture of that advancing fleet of death was just a great flare of fire dead ahead—fire in the water itself—as though Hell itself had blown off the lid.

CHAPTER XIII

I AWOKE to see a face I had never forgotten, a face that had haunted my dreams for over two years, a face

that meant more to me than my miserable life. Ceulna was smiling down upon me, pillowing my head in her lap. I sighed, but I was too weak to talk. I sighed and sank into unconsciousness again. A long period of shadow life went by for me, and when I was at last conscious of my surroundings, I noticed the rustle of leaves outside the transparent walls, and the soft light of Venus on the fantastic flowers among the rustling leaves outside. I turned my head, and the cheerful, fantastic drapes, the sewing basket with the mark of Tuon art work, the green crystal gazers globe on a stand—everything about the room told me it was Ceulna's apartment in some Tuon city of Venus. I turned my head again, and on the other side sat Ceulna, her lovely head of curling pale-fire hair bent over the sewing of some dancing costume, a food tray beside her, telling me that her bedside vigil was one she did not leave even for meals.

I spoke, my voice husky from long disuse: "Ceulna—come here."

She sprang to her feet with all that impossible grace which only the crystal walk-webs of Venusian cities give a woman, with a glad cry on her lips. "My big one—you are awake at last. Oh, I have feared you never would come back to life again. So long—so long—you have lain there, never stirring."

I tried to sit up, but it was no use. I gasped, "Ceulna, what has happened? Where am I? Give with the information."

"You are with me in the city of Lefern. This is my home now, and Onua's apartments are right next door. The Sea People sent you to us when they returned several shiploads of Tuon volunteers who had enlisted to fight against Hecate. But you seemed to have suffered some terrible shock. They said

you had been in an explosion, a very big explosion. It was an explosion which wiped out all of Hecate's strength at one blow. There were a few survivors—and you and Hecate were among them. They have Hecate in an undersea city, somewhere here on Venus. She is still alive, and I suppose they do not kill her because they want to pump her wisdom out of her head for their use. But she will get no more baby blood to keep her alive. So you can know she will not live long."

I lay back, a flood of relief coursing through me. Hecate was out of the picture. I was back with my best friends, the Tuon Amazons of Venus, and with Ceulna, the best woman I had ever known, besides being the most alluring. I sighed again, and fell asleep with Ceulna's lips on my own.

* * *

THAT is all of the story, except for one little incident. About six months later Lt. Oltissa, whom I had thought dead, landed a water-filled flyer on the great aerial flying field outside the city. (Like all Tuon building, the air field was a great artificial structure hung from the mighty trees to keep everything far off the swampy ground).¹

¹Darwin—*Naturalists Voyage Around the World*.

Page 83—Extinct quadrupeds: "The great size of the bones of the Megatheroid animals, including the Megatherium, Megalonyx, Scelidotherium and Mylodon, is truly wonderful. The habits of these animals were a complete puzzle to naturalists. . . . The teeth indicated, by their simple structure, that these Megatheroid animals lived on vegetable food, on the leaves and twigs of trees . . . some eminent naturalists believed that like the sloths, they subsisted by climbing, back downward, on trees, and feeding on the leaves. It was a bold idea to conceive even antediluvian trees with branches strong enough to bear animals as large as elephants."

So, if you readers don't think trees get as big as I say they do on Venus—see what they think of trees on earth at one time.—Author

Ceulna and I were called out to the field. Putting on air helmets, we entered the water-filled interior of the flyer, and Oltissa gave us a brief explanation.

"You see, Hogan—or should I say Steel—when I was drawn from the ship you thought me dead. But some of those devils of Hecate's revived me by use of the strong beneficial—and after a time I regained my strength. When Hecate's fleet was blown up,—the rest of Hecate's garrison fled, leaving us locked in our cells where they had been saving us for one of their orgies of cruelty—or for some purpose similar. I burst the doors with my strength; freed Hyplotee; found a ship and rejoined my people. Now I am here—alive—to take you and show you what has become of the evil life that was Hecate—the mighty.

"Hecate is near death. I thought you and Steel—or Hogan, as I call him, would like to see what time has done to her—what evil has caught up with Hecate at the end. You will not enjoy it though I suppose you should, for you two have suffered as much as anyone from her work. But seat yourselves, and I will take you to her."

A half-hour later Oltissa dived the little flyer deep into the mighty sea of Venus. I can't tell you where it was, and Oltissa was not very explicit. In the depths we glided into the great tunnel opening on the bottom where lay a city of the Sea People, called Mer-trop. It was one of their largest and oldest cities, besides being the capital city of their vast state. Under its rule were the many cities of the seas of Venus, as well as colonies on Earth, Mars, and a small settlement on Mercury.

Oltissa wasted no time on social amenities. She led us deep into the bowels of the undersea, water-filled

caverns of the city. There we entered an air-filled room, and took off our helmets, glad to escape the terrible pressure. It was a great laboratory, fitted up for the purpose of getting Hecate's knowledge, while the opportunity offered.

IN the center of the room, surrounded by busy scientists and workmen, taking thought records and asking detailed questions, sat the mighty Hecate—no longer mighty. As I approached, a gasp of horror was wrung from me. A pity sprang into my breast in spite of my loathing for the creature. Without her daily infusion from the veins of doomed children, Hecate's tremendous age was taking its terrible toll. Shrivelled to a greater cadaverousness than any mummy ever exhibited, life still glowed in her fierce yellow eyes, but nowhere else on her horrible shrinking bones was there much evidence of life. Over her played the extremely potent beneficial rays of the mighty science of the Sea People, for it was not yet time for her to die—there were still things they might learn from her mind. But I knew that those rays alone held life in the body that had cheated death so long. I understood that not for all the wisdom in the world would Hecate receive one drop of blood from a child of the Sea People—or from any other child on Venus.

The long black hair that had streamed in such witch-like tresses from her head, was now snow white and for the most part gone. Over her head was the thought recording helmet, but her face was revealed under its metal intricacy. Her face, that had been hard as a rock and flushed so pinkly under the grey skin with the plentiful stolen blood, now was a real grey of death, and furrowed with wrinkle on wrinkle till the shrunken, horrible

mouth alone gave the face any resemblance to the human.

Her huge bones, covered only by the folds of grey skin and the shrunken, twisted muscles, moved slowly as she tried to hide her face from my eyes, my eyes that must have shown all the revulsion which I had always felt for her but had never been able to heed. The woman that still lived in her trying to hide that horror of a face from her unwilling lover's eyes—that last gesture of insane vanity in the creature that had been the powerful and heartless Hecate—was the the last straw to break the thread that had bound me to her will with such strength for so long a time. At last my mind was free of the compulsion her witch-art had put upon me.

It seems to me that nature has a balance wheel of some kind, a kind of inexorable weighing device that exacts its pay for every mistake made by the mind of man, that Hecate had had time to make all the mistakes possible, and was now paying for all of them before she died. For I believe that men can beat age, but cannot truly beat evil, and that age and evil are allied in some way, physically allied because results of the same primal cause. Though Hecate had beaten age, she had not beaten evil, and all the evil she had done was now descended upon her, and her face and form, once the epitome of hardy and ruthless strength, was now giving up the last shred of its stolen strength to the inexorable natural law called the conservation of energy. Nature has a purpose, and all strength that is diverted from the path of that purpose is sooner or later returned to the primal store and will again be used toward the original purpose.

HECATE was in agony. All her bones seemed to be aches, by the expression in her face, and the effects

of age increased visibly as we watched. Feebly she beckoned to me, and I approached her, though it required a strong effort of will to overcome the loathing in me.

"My American fighter, the only man of courage sufficient for me to admire—do not remember me this way. Think of me as one that meant you well in spite of the furies of Hell that lived in her." Her voice was a gasping croak from the pit.

"That is a strange speech to hear from you, Hecate. But you were always a contradiction. Hecate, if in the place you are going there is a way to live, remember this—life loves life in other things as well as in itself. And when a life does not love the life in others, it has died. You have been dead longer than you know, but your foul methods have kept you alive in spite of the death of the real life in you. It is not a real life—evil life. Hecate, I am sorry for your life, that could have been so much—yet was only negative in value."

That terrible claw, that had caused the death of untold armies in the far reaches of the past through which she had lived and fought triumphantly as an immortal being of the Devil's own wisdom, reached up and touched me vaguely, as a senile mother might touch a grandson. "You remember this, my strong one—evil does not give pleasure. Evil is a possession—and not the self—and when your soul becomes an evil alien living inside you—have the courage to die; do not fight on for life as I did. There is no way known to drive the evil self out, once it is in possession. Even I do not understand evil. But it is not thought or reason; my own logic always told me the opposite of my evil will—but the evil was stronger than logic. It is like an ever-anger that takes away the wits, and lives on and on—

never thinking—just being always angry. It is a horrible life I have lived—and talking this way is not my will, but only the weakness of death. I have no remorse—but only these thoughts that go round in my head about you. I have a gift for you—a great gift that only I can give. It is a hidden mechanism—a very strange and wonderful machine. In this locket is the secret of its hiding place. Take it."

I TRIED to thank her, for though Hecate deserved nothing from me or any other sane man—still I could have pity for the fallen. But she strove to raise that claw again for silence, saying—"Man, if you get that machine from its hiding place, and learn what it may teach you, you will become a greater man than any other. There is a mighty wisdom in it—but I could never use its teaching, for my evil self would not let me obey its teaching. Perhaps you are man enough to make your will do what this machine teaches you to do. Goodby, my poor confused one. Remember that Hecate laughs at you, too, for a foolish child whom it pleased her to amuse herself with. But my laugh has a good thing in it, too. It is a laugh at everything in life. It is not worth much, my big one. Work to make it so, but you will not live to see it become anything of great value. But work, if you love those laughing children—and mayhap you can make up for what my life has cost them. Not that it matters; foolish men are but ants with little brains. But it seems men must try to become something, for the Gods so decreed. If you ever get where you have the power, my friend, flee the sun. It is the cause of man's worthlessness. Once, long ago in the times we of the caves know of—men were not such feeble ants, but mighty and Godlike. Flee the sun, and you may become as they

were. Now, go, and forget you ever knew me."

I didn't go at once, however, for I was curious about something. "Hecate, how is it you never followed up the lead that Hyplotee had of the location of the master weapons of Venus?"

"She had a map in her memory, yes, but it was a map in a code I could not decipher. I would have, in time, but I did not get the time. I am glad it is over and you are free—O man among men. If I had had you in the beginning, it would have been different. It would have been you and I—Lords of all Earth." For a second the mighty spirit that had driven her through the

deserts of time for so many centuries, driven her to surmount so many terrific obstacles, blazed forth from her yellow eyes, but in an instant it was gone, and only a dying, gigantic old woman remained—no terrible Goddess, but a loathsome thing that lived on blood and could not get any. My heart praised the fates that had at last brought Hecate low.

I turned, tucking the locket into my shirt pocket. Ceulna took my arm, and we left the chamber where the last pitiful scene in the mighty drama that had been the life of the vampire, Hecate, the Mother of Sin, was drawing swiftly to a close.

AMAZING Facts

By
A. MORRIS

THE LOUSE IN HISTORY

FEW of us are aware of the tremendous role that most despised of earthly creatures, the louse, has played in history. As a bearer of one of the most dreaded diseases inflicted upon mankind—typhus—lice have sometimes been the deciding factor in losing or winning a war.

Throughout all past ages lice have played an intimate role in the social life of the human race. During Montezuma's rule in Mexico, the Indians had such a sense of duty to pay tribute to their ruler that the poorest, if they had nothing else to offer, daily cleaned their bodies and saved the lice. And when they had enough to fill a bag, they laid it at the feet of their king.

Lice have even been important in politics. They were used to decide elections in the town of Hurdenburg, Sweden, during the Middle Ages. When a mayor was to be elected, the eligible persons sat around a table with their heads bowed forward, allowing their beards to rest on the table. A louse was then placed in the center of the table. The man into whose beard the louse adventured was the mayor for the ensuing year.

Gentlemen and ladies all over Europe resorted to shaving their heads and wearing wigs in an effort to rid themselves of vermin.

As late as the eighteenth century scientists were harboring a misconception about the louse. Some went so far as to suggest that children were protected by their lice from a number of diseases.

The manner of living throughout the Middle Ages made the spread of lice inevitable. Houses of the poor were mere hovels. Washing was practically out of the question—and all classes, high and low alike wore a great many clothes which they rarely changed. Nowadays lice are not the common pest they once were. But as everyone who has experienced war knows, let soap become scarce, or a change of clothing be delayed—and it takes no time at all before the louse comes back to its own.

STAINLESS STEEL STITCHES

THREADS made of stainless steel as fine as human hair are used as a nonabsorbable suture material. Wounds sewed with steel can be exposed to heat and X-Ray treatments with excellent results. The stainless steel thread is pliable, has high tensile strength and can be knotted easily. This metal suture is expected to take its place along with such materials as catgut, silk, nylon, cotton, linen and horsehair now being used in surgery.

MARCH OF THE MERCURY MEN

By
DON
WILCOX



Fearsome indeed was the spectacle as the Mercury Men began their march—because it seemed that nothing could resist their cruel progress



The thunder of
giant feet and the
clatter of armored bod-
ies rang through the forest

AT FIRST it sounded like the slow, measured chuffing of a lazy freight train, but Bruce Devoe knew that a freight train here in the swampy jungles of Mercury was out of the question.

"It's the crunching of jaws," Mary repeated, "the jaws of a mighty animal devouring his food."

Bruce would have liked to think that his bride was joking. His protective instincts had been dulled by

civilization. It wasn't his nature to be afraid of anything. If there was danger, their stranded space ship, only a hundred yards away, would offer protection.

"We'd better run for it," Mary said. Then she caught Bruce's arm. "Listen! How many are there?"

"More than one," Bruce muttered, as they hurried along. "I wish we could see."

The forest of mammoth toadstools

and fleshy plants was everywhere around them. Vision was limited to a few yards, at best.

"We're not lost, are we, Bruce?" Her voice trembled slightly; then she managed to laugh at the irony of her question.

"Lost is a mild word for it, dear. From the hour that crackpot Major Vickering told us to take the long way around this planet we've been heading for our doom. And I'd promised you this would be the happiest honeymoon in the world."

Mary smiled up at him courageously. "I could never imagine a more interesting one—if—"

"If we get back, yes." Bruce's worried tone gave way to a chuckle that was more in keeping with his normal disposition. "Darn it, we've got to get back, or we'll run up a whale of a bill on that rented space ship."

They dodged around a clump of massive plants expecting to see the metallic hull of the stranded ship. Instead there was only the edge of yellow swamp, not at all inviting. They changed their course. The sounds of the slowly approaching animals were coming closer.

"It must be this way," Bruce said. "I seem to remember that big orchid-color mushroom. So the swampy mud-hole our ship grounded in must be—"

"Stop, Bruce!" Mary cried. "The beast!"

"Beast?" Bruce gulped. "Oh—and what a beast!"

In the first moment of seeing one of the great Mercury beetles there wasn't much the Earth folks could do but stand and stare. Afterward Bruce remembered making a mental comparison of the animal's size with a five-ton truck. He also thought of a new football with a gleaming tan surface, enlarged a thousand times.

Crunch . . . crunch . . . crunch.

"Bigger than an elephant," Mary whispered. "He hasn't seen us yet. What shall we do?"

"Try to figure out what he'll do," Bruce said. "He seems to be quite contented with those blueberries."

"Maybe we're too small to be noticed—but no!" Mary's optimism on that score faded with her second thought. The berries were only as large as melons. "Our heads would probably tempt him just as much!"

"We'd be the first berries he ever ate that hollered," said Bruce. "Okay, honey, on your tiptoes. We'll back-track a few steps. I've got my gun ready."

"Two more on your left, Bruce."

"Two more?" Bruce glanced around, and the sight that met his eyes was enough to freeze him in his tracks. "Triplets! As the politician said to the nurse, I demand a recount."

"The recount," said Mary, "totals five. See, back through those big red stalks—"

THEY might have shot and killed one, as Bruce afterward observed; and they might have taken a chance on two or three. But with at least five of these strange monsters approaching them, the most they could hope for was to be passed unseen. It didn't become an Earth man with one ray-gun to start a one-man war against creatures whose vulnerability was unknown. Not to mention potentialities of speed and manner of attack.

The beetles, in spite of their apparent clumsiness, were coming along at a pace faster than a man's walk. There was a sort of cowpath along the edge of the swamp, worn wide to accommodate all species of elephant-sized creatures.

Off to the right of the path Bruce

noticed something that offered an opportunity for protection. It was some kind of skeleton, a massive frame somewhat smaller than that of the approaching beasts.

"It looks like a man," said Mary, all out of breath.

"There might be room inside the skull. There'd be less chance of being seen . . . No, we can't get in handily. This roof of ribs will have to do."

They huddled together within the calcareous old barrel, which had doubtless lain here for many a season. They held their breath. The big animals idled along. One of them came right toward the skeleton as if to step on it, but at the last moment passed around to the side. The skeleton trembled from the jolt of the footsteps. The dust of rotting bones showered down lightly upon the two persons within.

"Safe?" Mary smiled up at Bruce. His arms were tight around her.

"We'll find the ship now," he said. He couldn't help glancing back with great curiosity at the skeleton. "What an oddity that old boy must have been. Do you suppose the species is extinct?"

"All I know is that the guide books for Mercury don't begin to tell what's up here," said Mary.

"Most tourists never venture beyond the space ports. Neither would we, if it hadn't been for that amazing Major Vickers. I still don't see how he was able to stow away in our ship. Your father said he had had everything checked thoroughly when he rented it for us . . . Well, there she sits, way down yonder, fin-deep in the mud."

"With the worst kind of motor trouble," said Mary.

Bruce might have commented that as long as he was the sole mechanic, any kind of mechanical difficulty was the worst. Space ships were out of his

line, and at present he had no notion what had brought this machine down to its perilous landing. He could already imagine himself raking through the drawers for an instruction manual and then wondering what to do with it.

"Sure, we'll analyze the grief and climb right out of it," he said with an exaggerated show of confidence. "Just put your trust in Bruce Devoe, keep your seat and here we go!"

"I do trust you, Bruce, and I love you," said Mary. "But frankly, I'll be surprised if—"

"Don't I look like a mechanical genius?"

"But you can't be all kinds at once, I'm sure," Mary declared. "And you were certainly a genius at salesmanship to get my father's consent."

They both laughed at this, for it was a well-known fact that selling anything to her hard-boiled father, J. K. Johnson, the porcelain king, was a major achievement.

"All right, I'm not a natural engineer," Bruce admitted. "I'll need some time to figure things out."

He went on to observe that nothing really got him down except *surprises*. That was his nature. As long as he could make plans and carry them out uninterruptedly he could take the world in his stride.

"But these devilish upsets, like discovering a stowaway in our honeymoon ship—"

"I'm still glad you forced him and his parachute out when we got to this planet," said Mary. "I wonder where he landed. It couldn't be far from here. Because, you remember? Almost immediately the motor—"

Mary broke off short.

"What's the matter?" Bruce whispered.

"More surprises. Listen!"

THE animals were returning. They were coming back in a regular stampe, Bruce thought. The thuds of their galloping feet sent forth a low roar that made black dust shower down from the giant toadstools.

Bruce and his bride were within a stone's throw of their grounded ship when the oncoming herd came rushing past them. They dropped down behind a rock for what protection it would offer. Bruce made ready with his gun.

Then came the greatest surprise of all. He and Mary both saw it at the same time. There were passengers riding on the backs of a few of these elephantine beetles—large, white, half-human giants with immense heads as large as their bodies. They were like the big skeleton, but in the flesh. Their huge eyes bugged out like telescopic instruments. Their tall, pointed ears brushed the leaves and branches overhead.

They had seen the space ship. One was pointing at it, others were shouting in shrill voices.

"Kwazz ! . . . Kwazz ! . . . Kwazz !"

CHAPTER II

Red Mouth, The Rider

WHEN giant beetles sallied forth with giant passengers, a certain young man almost always jumped aboard one of the beasts for a free ride. He was the ridingest denizen of the swamps of Mercury, this slim, clean-muscled young man.

He was nameless. That is to say, he had forgotten his real name. The giants called him Zee-Moop which, interpreted, meant "Red Mouth." For it was this nameless young man's habit to decorate his mouth with a wide ring of red clay.

He didn't know why he did it. He couldn't remember reasons for many

of the things he did. And he wished—oh, how he wished—that he could remember.

Most of all he wondered how he happened to be the only person among all these giants—the only creature among them who was small and intricately featured. They treated him as a pet. He was, in fact, a favorite among some of these big fellows. Especially Vammerick and his friends.

And then, again, he was a thorn in the flesh of others. Rippyck, that soulless and humorless giant who never talked while he ate, was one who often tried to make trouble for Red Mouth. The fellow could never take a joke. He would never laugh when Red Mouth turned flipflops over the backs of the giant beetles.

But worst of all, Rippyck would take every opportunity to insult Red Mouth by insinuating that he resembled some of the terrible freaks who dwelt on the other side of the ridge.

Now any reasonable potato-eater with fully developed eyesight could see that Red Mouth did not wear a covering of green scales. Nor did his toes resemble the talons of a bird of prey. Nor did he have antennae growing out of his forehead, as some freaks did. He was certainly not one of them. As a physical specimen he stood alone.

Red Mouth had a deep-rooted respect for his own body and was filled with savage anger when Rippyck or anyone else hurled insults. He, an outcast from the tribe of freaks? Why, he felt an instinctive revulsion whenever he had to look at one of them.

Of course, he was in no way related to these "potato giants." (He called them that because they made potatoes their chief food. Moreover, they grew to be as shapeless as potatoes. Take a huge potato, give it two pointed ears,

turn its eyes inside out so that they bugged forward like two camera lenses, give it dangling arms and stumpy legs of yellow clay, and you would have a fine comic statue of Rippyick! Red Mouth had a great attraction for comic things. He'd have to make a statue like that some lazy day.)

So, while Red Mouth wasn't related to these big giants, somehow in the recent past that was all so foggy in his memory, he had come to live with them. He had learned their language and their ways, and sometimes with his lively wit or his physical agility he had helped them out of trouble.

And sometimes Vammerick, the potato giant with the broadest grin, would call him not simply Zee-Moop, but Zee-Moop-ick. Which was the same as saying, "Red Mouth, our brother."

Today a few of the potato giants were riding.

RED MOUTH bounded along over the tops of three or four toadstools where he had been stunting for his own amusement. He flipflopped through the air to land on his feet behind Vammerick. The back of the beetle shuddered a little under the impact and then moved along.

Who was riding today? Red Mouth looked over the herd of gleaming brown and yellow shells. Only a few were occupied. There were Pellick, Matterick, Ellonick, Rippyick, and a few others.

"Where are we all going?" Red Mouth called in the native language.

One of Vammerick's sharp ears twitched, but he didn't hear. Red Mouth leaped up and caught an arm over his giant friend's shoulder. Then with another bound he was sitting on the giant's head. He bent down to one of the huge ears.

"Where are we going, Vammerick?"

"Just gathering in the stock," said Vammerick. "They're feeding down by the swamps again. Too much danger they'll find their way to the wrong side of the ridge."

"Would they come back home in a few days?"

"Not if the snail-eaters found them first," said Vammerick. "We'd have to buy them back. We'd have to dig around in the wet places for things to buy them with. I'd rather keep my feet dry."

Red Mouth understood. He knew that the snail-eaters—that is, the tribe of freaks on the other side of the ridge—would be quick to take an advantage. Whatever they charged for the return of lost beetles would have to be paid in terms of snails.

A snail was the standard of values when it came to dealings between the potato giants and the snail-eaters. Not small snails, either, but full grown ones, almost as large as Red Mouth. Of course, the actual payment might be made with other goods—frogs, mice, worms, or even young, edible beetles. But the finest, fattest frog was hardly ever accepted at the full value of a snail; and it took ten well-fed earthworms to equal that value. The snail-eaters were hard customers to deal with.

"They'd like to see us have to grub for them," said Red Mouth.

"They would like to see us dead," said Vammerick, "but as long as we have this ridge between us, with a solid peace agreement planted at the pinnacle, we forget there is a war."

"But there isn't any war," said Red Mouth. "I've been here for a long time. I don't know how long because I can't remember anything. But I've never seen any fighting between you and the snail-eaters."

"Fighting, no. War, yes. It is always there, under the surface. If they

show their scaled forms on the wrong side of the ridge, you will see murder. Nor do any of us dare ride beyond the boundary. That is the agreement that makes us seem at peace."

Red Mouth thought these matters over as the beetle-bus jogged along the way. The jungle growth became thicker and deeper in color. The red blood-roots were too massive to be walked over. The beetles had to thread their way through a maze. They knew where they were going. Their sense of smell was as well developed as their masters' telescopic eyesight. Errant beetles and kindred creatures were added to the procession along the way.

"If war ever broke out again," said Red Mouth speculatively, "what would happen?"

"The agreement is that it won't ever happen," said Vammerick. His huge eyes glanced up curiously. Red Mouth was doing a graceful handstand on Vammerick's head.

"But if?"

"The agreement is that the great treasure which appeared on the pinnacle of the ridge when we made our peace belongs to both of us in common—the snail-eaters and ourselves. But neither they nor we will touch it. However, if there should be an outbreak of war—"

"Well?"

"Our side would race for the pinnacle at the far end of the ridge to claim this treasure. If we could claim it we would know the war was won."

RED MOUTH caught his heels on an overhanging branch and swung free of Vammerick. He dropped down to the glistening back of the next beetle-like creature that passed under him. It looked back at him with its silly lavender gelatine eyes, not knowing what to make of a passenger on its back. It

happened not to be one of the bus-beetles, broken for riding, but a young and untrained creature. It gave a lurch and a shake. Red Mouth laughed. It flung its cactus-like antennae around to try to knock him off. He leaped over them as easily as jumping rope.

Jumping rope? There was something familiar in that thought. Where had he done it before? Why couldn't he remember?

There had been a fall from some high place, he had reasoned, when this problem of lost memory was first discovered there in his vague, groping thoughts. The scar on the left side of his head was going away gradually. He had asked the potato giants about it when he had first found himself talking their language. But no one had been able to tell him anything about his past troubles. They only knew that they had found him, one day, riding beetles like an expert. He had helped them break in new ones. From the start he had been so cooperative and useful that Vammerick had said he must not be driven off.

And so the giants had made a place for him in their village, and he had been allowed to build himself a "kwazz" to live in.

Red Mouth could no more explain to himself why he liked living with them than he could explain why he liked to have a rim of red clay around his mouth. Perhaps it was because, in his eyes, there was so much of the comic about these big overgrown potatoes. Their lusty shouts, their attitude of daring when they rode their slow, clumsy beetles, their big serious eyes always on the lookout for trouble—all of these things made Red Mouth laugh to himself.

Even now, as he thought of the possible war that Vammerick had just described, he chuckled with amusement.

Imagine old Rippyick, as serious as a barn owl, having to race along with a caravan all the way up that tortuous ridge trail. Imagine how easy it would be for those diabolical freaks from the other side of the ridge to roll down a few boulders to test the crusty backs of the beetles.

But Red Mouth, for all his love of bizarre and spectacular things, would certainly not wish to see any harm come to Vammerick and his friends.

Crunch!

What was that? The sound came from somewhere up at the head of the procession. The foliage was so thick here that Red Mouth couldn't see very far ahead. But that low crunching noise sounded very much as if a beetle bus had gone down.

The procession surged forward, for all at once there was a great shouting of potato giant voices up ahead.

"Hurry up, Vammerick!" Red Mouth yelled as he bounded along from one beetle back to another. "You'll miss out on the excitement."

The news echoed back from the shouts before Red Mouth could get there.

"Two snail-eaters! The beast saw them and fell!"

The next thing Red Mouth knew he was looking into two very frightened faces, not of snail-eaters, but of creatures exactly like himself.

One was a very beautiful female. The other, a strong-looking male.

The male had a gun in his hand, and instantly Red Mouth knew what had brought the beetle down in a crash of death.

Above the pandemonium of potato giant voices, Red Mouth called out his accusation in his own English tongue.

"You shot him!"

"Yes!" the girl answered in a shrill

cry. "Just as he closed his jaws on us!"

Then the man opened his mouth and added his defiant bark to the angry babble.

"You'd better call the others off or they'll fall too. This gun is full of death."

CHAPTER III

Ick Versus Ick

RED MOUTH was a cunning pet, in the eyes of these giants. But at this moment he came near to taking command of the situation.

Not content to be in the center of the circle, he sprang upon Matterick's shoulders and jumped to Rippyick's head. There he waved his arms at the several potato giants, and they listened to him.

"They are not snail-eaters," he called out in the giant tongue. "They are no more snail-eaters than I am."

The big, gray ears of Rippyick twitched against Red Mouth's bare legs. There was a look of sarcasm turned up at him. Rippyick couldn't miss a chance to show what he believed about Red Mouth.

"I can talk the language of these creatures," Red Mouth hastened to say, just in time to silence the giant on whose head he was standing. "They will tell me what they are doing here."

"Tell them," said Vammerick, "to stand up on the back of the dead *zwouffer*."

Red Mouth translated the order.

"Climb up on the beetle, you two! The potato giants want to see you."

"Potato giants!" The fierce-eyed young man echoed the words. Then he and the girl, in spite of their fear, exchanged glances of amusement.

Red Mouth scrambled down all the way to the ground to help the couple

obey the order. Other orders were being called from all around. The giants were exceedingly curious over this encounter.

"They want to hear you talk again," Red Mouth said.

"What shall we say?" said the man.

"They want to know what you are doing here."

"Our ship stalled, and we landed here by mistake. If they'll help us get our ship out of the swamp we'll go on our way."

"Ship?" Red Mouth repeated. "I'd forgotten there were such things . . . Oh, I see. The big mass of silver over there in the bank. So you came here in that?"

All this had a familiar sound to it, and Red Mouth wanted to go on with questions of his own. But the potato giants were scowling out of their big eyes, wanting to know why they were being cut out of the conversation.

"This big fellow, Vammerick, says he wants to hear the smaller one talk again. He liked the sound of that female voice."

The girl, laughing, said a few words. Then she looked up at the big white creature and knew her performance didn't satisfy.

"He wants you to scream, the way you did before," said Red Mouth. "And he wants to know your names."

The procession started on a few minutes later, circling through the swamp trails in search of all the straggling swouffers that could be found.

IT WAS a slower procession than any Red Mouth remembered, quieter as to giant voices, but ringing loud with this very weird voice of the girl named Mary. Hers was such a fascinating voice that they couldn't get enough of it. For a while she accommodated with a variety of screams. Then she

turned to singing.

When the man named Bruce began singing to give her a rest, the potato giants grumbled their discontent.

"Better keep silent," Red Mouth warned. "They know what they like. And they've got some funny ideas about stopping things they don't like."

"What do you mean?" asked Bruce.

"I'll explain," said Red Mouth.

"That big giant with the very white ears—he's Vammerick, my best friend. He's very kind, as potato giants go."

"Oh, I'm glad to know they're kind," Bruce said, with a premature glow of hope in his eyes.

"Wait till I finish," said Red Mouth.

"My kind friend has just mentioned that if you intrude upon the girl's song with your squawk once more, he is in favor of killing you at once instead of waiting till we get back to the village."

"Oh!" Mary's vocalizing suddenly turned to a scream again, for she had kept an ear to this conversation.

"There's a disagreement among them," Red Mouth went on. "That other big fellow with the mouse-gray ears—that's Rippyick—he's in favor of killing you both right now. He says his ears hurt him."

"What shall I do?" Mary wailed.

"Keep singing," said Red Mouth.

"I'd rather please my friend Vammerick than my enemy Rippyick."

Before they got back to their village they stopped for a fight.

It began with an argument between Rippyick and Vammerick over who was entitled to the prisoners. Vammerick had taken a whimsical notion that they were his.

"Just between us, I hope Vammerick gets you," said Red Mouth. "Confidentially, he hasn't any grounds for his claim, because he was bringing up the rear when they found you. But I hope he gets you. He won't be so apt

to torture you when he kills you."

"Must be a nice fellow," said Bruce.

"Or he might even sell you to the snail-eaters alive," Red Mouth reflected.

"Would that be good?"

"Well, yes and no. It would be all right till the snail-eaters got hungry for a fancy dinner. What did you do with your gun?"

"That big giant with the gray ears—Rippyick—threw it in the swamp," said Bruce. "He doesn't know it, but I tried to swing the ray on him just before he grabbed me."

"They aren't used to guns," said Red Mouth. "He had just enough instinct to be afraid of it. They're not used to guns, or ships, or pretty girls . . . M-m-m."

"Why are you staring at me?" Mary asked.

"I'm just remembering—but everything is so dim. Never mind," said Red Mouth.

HE TURNED their attention to the quarreling giants. They were getting set for the fight. The beetles were arranged in a circle, within which the combat would take place.

"See them take their stands. Whoever knocks the other off his feet is the winner."

"Whoopee!" Bruce exclaimed. "It would take a thousand-pound punch—"

"What was that word you used?" Red Mouth asked. For a second everything in his mind was whirling. There was something in the sound of that expression. "I used to hear that—that whoo-oo. What does it mean?"

"Whoopee? It doesn't mean anything . . . Look, there they go!"

For a few seconds Red Mouth was oblivious to the fight, for the wheels within his dusty memory were spinning. He couldn't bring it back, whatever it

was he had almost recalled. But all at once he felt a great bounding gladness that these two strangers had come along. Their words were like a fountain to a thirsty man.

"Look at them slug each other!" Bruce shouted. "They've drawn their eyes in so they can take it full in the face. Whoopee! My stars, what a wallop that Rippyick carries!"

The fight went round and round without a gong to stop it. Rippyick punched overhand like a rabbit. Poor Vammerick's ears were no longer white, but pink. The points weren't holding up so well, either. A lot of Rippyick's head blows that missed came skidding down over the ears.

And yet the fight was by no means one-sided. Vammerick was doing more than dodging. He watched his chance for body blows. His great arms swung up like a windmill wheel in a storm. Three times he caught Rippyick full force, and then there was some tottering back on the heels for the gray-eared giant.

"Come on, Vammerick!" Bruce yelled. "Give it to him, Vammerick!"

"Oh, Bruce, how can you take sides in such a dreadful fight?"

"If Vammerick is this man's friend, then he might be our friend," said Bruce. "Anyway, I like his looks better than the others'."

"Yes, I do, too," Mary agreed.

Red Mouth heard, and he felt a growing interest in these well-dressed strangers. He studied them closely when he thought they were not looking.

Now the girl joined her companion in the cry, "Come on, Vammerick!"

The cry rang out to the combatant. He heard his name called by the voice that had attracted him so. And he was, unfortunately, entranced.

That split second of virtual paralysis was Vammerick's undoing. Rippyick

ick slugged him with the blow of a freight train, and he left his feet and landed on his posterior.

The fight was over and the giants all shouted for the victor.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" Mary cried.

"Well, you did it," Red Mouth said to her in a matter-of-fact voice. "You two folks are now the property of Rippyick, and I'm sorry for you. Sir—er—Bruce, if it isn't asking too much, could I have your shoes before your owner takes you in charge?"

"If it isn't asking too much," Bruce retorted hotly, "could you kindly help us get out of here the quickest way?"

CHAPTER IV

Visitors of the Night

THE village of the potato giants was a little like the villages of the jungle people in some tropical regions of the earth, Bruce thought. It had been laid out cow-path fashion—or, more accurately, beetle-path. Every dwelling, or kwazz, was tall enough to accommodate a full-grown native standing on the back of his beetle.

Thus the kwazzes were thirty to forty feet tall. It was a weird looking village—an uncut jungle with rustic, loosely thatched towers protruding.

The natives would ride into their homes standing on the backs of their beetle-buses. These beasts of burden would walk right on out through the large door on the other side, minus their passengers, and wander aimlessly through the village in search of grazing. If a neighbor's front yard and doorstep offered tempting berries or luscious grass, the beetle would make himself at home until driven off.

If tropical foliage formed a part of a potato giant's kwazz, the beasts might feast their way right through a wall

and cause the roof to cave in. In which case the irate owner, as often as not, would gather up his goods and walk away to build himself another kwazz, rather than patch up an old one. The jungle materials grew rank and plentiful.

Unfortunately for Mary and Bruce, the prison in which they were stored was not so flimsy a structure. Apparently the potato giants' proudest architectural achievements were their prisons. This one was twelve yards wide and fourteen long. Bruce got the dimensions through his feet in the course of hours of pacing.

Mary sat quietly in one corner, watching the sun move the shadows of the tall, closely set, pointed stakes that formed the wall. She applied her mathematics to the shadow and the angle of the sun, and informed her husband that the pointed stakes were twenty-two feet high.

"And to think," Bruce muttered, "I brought you here for the world's most wonderful honeymoon."

Mary nodded. "I always wondered what a honeymoon would be like," she said. "I've always heard it was the time when a couple really got acquainted."

"Yes, when the wife discovers what a bad temper she's married."

"And the husband," said Mary, "finds out he's tied to a cry-baby."

"Right now," said Bruce, "I've got such a bad temper I could bite a hole through that wall."

"I could cry," said Mary. "What will they do with us?"

"You heard what Red Mouth said."

"Do you trust him?" Mary asked.

"I don't have much choice. He's the only human being we've seen. He's the only creature that talks our language. His explanations usually hit the nail right on the head. He's our

only chance."

"It's a shaky chance," said Mary dolefully. "I wish he wouldn't look at me that way. Did you see the way he jumped toward me when he first saw us, right after you killed the big animal?"

"It all happened so fast," said Bruce. "He called you some name, didn't he? He was awfully surprised, and I remember having a sudden fear that he wanted to grab you and kiss you. But just then this giant named Rippyck was pouncing down on me and I was trying to shoot him. I thought he meant to kill us."

"He does," said Mary. "But speaking of Red Mouth, I seem to remind him of someone. When he came at me he held out his arms and said 'Lena!' Just like that. I said, 'I'm not Lena.' Then for a minute he touched his head as if he was trying to remember something. But the next thing you knew he went into that monkey act, climbing up on the giants' heads, shouting at them, trying to tell them what was what."

"He's a strange one," Bruce said. "I can't account for his being here. And all those grotesque tricks—you'd think he was something out of a cartoon comedy."

"He doesn't remember a thing about where he came from. Three or four times on our way to the village he looked at me that way, and said, 'Are you sure you aren't Lena?' It gives me the creeps."

THROUGH the cracks in the wall of stakes they could watch the activities of the village. When the day's sunlight faded to twilight they could still see the white, ghostlike forms of the giants coming and going along the paths.

Occasionally they would catch sight

of Red Mouth, running and chasing with some of the native children of his own size. They were evidently clamoring for him to teach them some new games, and he was putting them off, on account of darkness.

"Not one of them can outrun or outjump him," Bruce observed. "He's a remarkable athlete."

"The gravity helps," said Mary. "Remember how light we felt when we first stepped out of the ship."

"But even allowing for that, his handsprings and flipflops and climbing are phenomenal. I don't believe they could keep him in this prison ten minutes."

Bruce caught the questioning look from Mary, and he answered the challenge of his own statement.

"All right, give me ten Earth hours," he said in a low voice, "and we'll be out."

"I'll help you," Mary said.

They walked along the rectangular wall, carefully examining the base of each stake. Somewhere there must be a weak spot in this man-tight enclosure.

They talked only in a whisper. Any sort of walls might have ears. They decided it wouldn't be wise to let Red Mouth know.

"He's too anxious for my shoes," Bruce muttered. "Goodness knows I'd hardly miss them in this climate. For perfect comfort I'd as soon strip down to his style of nothing but trunks."

"From his ragged condition," said Mary, "he'll soon be after your trousers."

"He takes for granted," said Bruce, "that they'll soon use us for the same purpose for which they talked of using that dead beetle—for some sort of barter with another bribe—"

"The snail-eaters," said Mary. "They intend to set the price on us tonight."

Bruce found what he thought might be the weakest spot in the wall, and he began to make his calculations.

BEFORE he had time to settle upon a plan, a visitor came tapping at the opposite side of the wall.

"Hello, in there! How are you getting along?"

"Hello, Red Mouth," Bruce called back. "What the news?"

"They've set their prices on you." Red Mouth's voice was low and confidential. "You both did very well."

"I suppose we ought to ask how much," said Bruce.

"The girl is worth all of two snails," said Red Mouth. "And you, Bruce, they've guessed that you weigh enough to go at three snails. But don't let it go to your head."

"I suppose there's a catch in it somewhere," said Bruce.

"They might have to reduce you to two snails if the snail-eaters guess how tough you are."

"I resent that," Bruce said. "Mary and I are worth four snails apiece, and if anyone tries to sell us for less we'll kick up a devil of a row."

Mary gave him a pat on the back. It filled her with admiration to see how his scrapping spirit held up.

"Listen to me, Red Mouth," said Bruce.

"Go ahead," came Red Mouth's voice out of the darkness beyond the prison wall. "There's no one here but us."

"Where do you think you came from—the Earth?"

"I suppose so."

"Don't you want to go back?" Bruce asked.

"I might if I could only remember what it was like. But I'm not so bad off here. I'm used to the potato giants; I understand their language and their customs."

"What did you do yesterday when it rained?" Red Mouth asked one night.

"We kept in the dry," said Bruce. "One corner of this prison is roofed over, after a fashion. It gives about as much protection as a leaky tent."

"Tent!" Red Mouth exclaimed, suddenly interested. "There's another word I hadn't thought of for a long time. Tent! Where's Lena? Will she talk with me tonight? I mean Mary."

"For a thousand dollars would you help us escape?"

"I haven't any more use for a thousand dollars than for a pair of horns and a tail," Red Mouth chuckled.

"You're a strange fellow," said Bruce. "Why do you wear that red around your mouth?"

"Couldn't say. It seems like the proper thing to do. Same with wearing those worn-out pants. Something tells me I ought to. And this fancy brass belt-buckle—maybe you haven't noticed it, but I'll show you, come daylight. Things like that are just naturally a part of me, I guess."

There was no way of getting any more information out of Red Mouth and apparently no hope of gaining his cooperation for an escape. Bruce and Mary both wished he would go so they could return to their work on the weak spot in the wall.

However, Red Mouth chose to remain for an all-night visit through the stakes.

On the following night he came again. And the night after.

Bruce looked longingly at the weak spot in the fence. But the village was too close at hand for him to risk any woodcutting activities by daylight.

At nights he prevailed upon Red Mouth to teach him bits of the native language. That might be a useful weapon if this prison term didn't end soon.

BRUCE let Mary stand near the fence and talk by the hour, since it gave him a chance to utilize the night's blackness for whittling at the stake. He had converted his belt-buckle into a crude blade.

"I wish," he had confided to Mary, "I could get that fancy bit of brass and steel that Red Mouth wears in his belt."

"You might catch him in a mood to trade," Mary suggested.

Soon afterward Bruce began to pay Red Mouth for teaching him the potato giant language. He tossed over one shoe one night, another the next, and slipped a shirt through on the third. He was on the verge of making a deal for a trade of his good trousers for Red Mouth's old ones, belt-buckle and all.

But the deal didn't go through. The nimble athlete abruptly decided that he was encumbered by too many clothes. He tossed everything back, no strings attached.

And so Bruce put on his shoes again and paced the dirt floor by day and chopped away at a section of wood by night.

Now, at last, the cutting went faster. The interior of the chosen post was partially rotted. And the conditions of work were decidedly more favorable. Red Mouth had gone off on a prolonged expedition with thirty-five or forty giants to gather in the errant livestock again. Bruce and Mary were left with their nights to themselves.

It was on one of these nights that a surprising voice sounded just outside the prison.

"Hsst . . . Hsst . . . Hello, in there!"

"Who is it?" said Bruce, trying to peer through the darkness.

"Your stowaway Major Vickers. Remember?"

CHAPTER V

The Major Has a Plan

MAJOR VICKERING came tiptoeing along the outside of the wall, looking for a favorable place through which to talk. He boldly flashed a light across the stakes that sent a row of bold shadows fanning across the floor.

"Keep that light off," Bruce snapped. "You'll get yourself killed, and us too."

"Don't you have a window in this joint? Ah, here's a spot. Get your faces over here, friends. I want to see if you look starved." The Major flashed the light again. "You're both in the very pink. What do they feed you?"

"Potatoes and more potatoes," Mary said. "I'll be surprised if we don't take on the shape of these potato giants."

In the pitch blackness the three talked and joked in a way they had never done on the space ship journey. Here in this lost jungle of Mercury, deep in trouble, perhaps they could afford to be friends.

"I've been making a survey of this region since you—er—dropped me off," said Major Vickers. "Most enlightening. Have you noticed a high mountainous ridge by daylight? I've taken a look on the other side. Some very different people over there. Far more savage than these big-headed fellows."

"How," said Bruce, "did you know where to find us?"

"My binoculars have directed my steps. I've managed to keep in touch with you remotely, as it were."

"Where is your parachute?" Mary asked.

"Surplus baggage," the Major said lightly. "I trust I'll never need it again. It was too heavy to carry so I discarded it. Where's our ship?"

"Our ship?" said Mary. She gave

Bruce a warning touch on the arm. Here was the old stowaway spirit returning.

"Our ship," said Bruce, "is parked in a certain private parking ground that might be mistaken for a jungle swamp. Why do you ask?"

"Because I'm planning to go back with you," said Major Vickering, airily. "I came here to make a quick and inexpensive survey of resources—"

"Inexpensive," Mary whispered for her husband's benefit. "Free transportation!"

"Now that I've accomplished the business end of our trip, I'm ready to go back as soon as you two gay honeymooners can accommodate me."

The Major said it in a most ingratiating tone. His words met the cold silence of Bruce's anger.

"Perhaps the Major thinks we aren't enjoying our honeymoon," Mary said icily.

The Major chose this moment to reveal his own hopeful countenance.

"Shut that damned thing off," Bruce barked. "And give us no more wise-cracks. We're in prison with a death sentence hanging over us. The space ship is mired in the swamp. If you've any bright ideas that don't require a flashlight—ssssh!"

SOMEONE was approaching with a heavy step. Vickering skipped off into the darkness. For several minutes the tread of the giant could be heard making the rounds of the prison. It may have been one of the older males who did not accompany the younger group on their trek to round up the live stock. Or it may have been one of the wives, performing the duties of a guard. At any rate, the footsteps pounded back to the village shortly.

Then after a long silence Major Vickering came back to the wall. Bruce

answered him in a low whisper and repeated the warning about the flashlight.

"I've got a plan for that ship," said the Major. "You say it's mired down? Don't worry for a minute. I've got a bag of tricks for handling space ships that come down unexpectedly. Now, as to your other complaint, being stuck here in prison—"

"With a death sentence hanging over us," Mary repeated.

"Well, I think I can trust you to meet that situation yourselves." The Major tapped the upright pole that was the very weak spot in the wall.

So he knew. By the flashlight he had seen the marks of Bruce's carving and knew that a short section from the base of this tall stake was soon to be cut free.

"Aren't you afraid the native giants will see what you're up to?"

"We fill the crevices with clay in the daytime," Bruce said, and added pointedly, "and at night there are no lights, ordinarily."

"How soon do you expect to get out?"

"It depends" said Bruce. "If you can get that space ship lifted out of the mud and ready for a take-off, we'd better stay inside these walls till everything is ready."

"That's using your head," the Major said. "Our chances are good until they discover we're up to something. So far, they haven't even seen me. Take it easy and I'll report back later."

With another darkness Major Vickering returned. He was fairly exploding with ideas.

Bruce and Mary listened, at once both hopeful and skeptical. Between themselves they had talked things over during the recent hours. On several scores they had found reason to be suspicious of the Major. His whole at-

titude toward the space ship trouble was much too confident. How did he know he'd ever be able to set the faulty mechanisms to rights?

How, indeed, had he known that the ship had come down "unexpectedly"? That the trouble had developed so soon after the Major had bailed out over the jungle seemed to imply that this canny stowaway had somehow fixed that trouble just before he jumped.

In support of this theory, Mary recalled another implication. The Major had come here to the prison perfectly confident that he could depend on a space ship ride back to the Earth. One would think that this whole honeymoon had been arranged simply for his personal benefit.

"I wonder," said Mary, pondering this problem, "whether my father had anything to do with his coming. 'You know, Dad was the one who rented our ship and gave it a final checking over. And if you don't know it, Dad is forever taking a whirl at some freak investment. Four out of five usually flop and the fifth makes a killing. I'm sure, now that I recall it, that he has tried to find out whether there would be cheap native labor here on Mercury for an extension of his manufacturing.'"

Bruce had made sport of the idea. "Fancy these potato giants working in a porcelain plant. They'd make a game of breaking crockery over each other's heads."

IT had been a rather difficult decision to reach; but Bruce and Mary had at last agreed that they must cooperate with Major Vickering. Whatever his business mission might be, or however much his comings and goings intruded upon their honeymoon, they would cancel their earlier suspicions of him and try to rely upon him as a friend.

And so, on the night that Vickering

returned, a trifle too enthusiastic over his brainstorm, they listened with willing ears.

"If these monster beetles were hitched together," said the Major, "they could pull a space ship out of Hell itself. All right, we're going to fix things so the potato giants will want that stranded ship for their own use."

"Fair enough. But how?"

"By upsetting the peace between them and the snail-eaters across the divide. You're aware of the long-standing enmity between these two groups? Well, I've seen these so-called snail-eaters, and they're a mean lot. Freaks of nature. I gather that they're an offshoot from a Mercury derelict colony of a few generations ago. Well, an open war between them and our potato giants would create a demand for our space ship."

"Interesting if true," said Bruce.

"Why would it?" said Mary.

"Because of a certain curious peace agreement involving a treasure house at the uppermost point of the ridge."

"The treasure kwazz," Bruce echoed.

"What about it? Have you seen it?"

"No, but I've heard dozens of echoes of the arrangement. In case of an outbreak of violence, both sides would race up the ridge to try to take possession of this treasure. As long as there is peace, both sides own it in common, but neither side touches it. And so there it sits on some distant mountain pinnacle *waiting to be seized as the prize of war.*"

"I wouldn't advise you to set off a war, Major," said Bruce.

"It's in the cards. I'll spring the war. You put it across with your captors that your ship could cart them up to the summit before their beetle caravan could finish breakfast. Can you put that factor over with them?"

"I suppose so."

"All right. Then if there's any gratitude in their leatherbound souls they'll owe it to you for helping them beat their enemy to the punch. And as soon as they've done it we'll all three shake the dew of this unholy swamp land off our feet."

"There might be four of us," said Bruce. "There's a young man living here with the potato giants. His memory is gone, but he speaks our language as well as theirs and his face lights up at the mention of the Earth."

"So that's how you've been learning their native language so fast," said the Major. "Well, let your conscience be your guide."

"I won't say anything about a war being started," said Bruce. "That's strictly your end of the deal."

IT was dawn a day later when they got their first sight of the snail-eaters.

Two of the hideous creatures were sneaking along toward the village. Mary heard the rustle of brush. She woke Bruce. He was instantly alert. The shadowy forms were passing along the opposite wall trying to peer in.

"Pretend you're asleep," Bruce whispered.

Mary watched through half-closed eyes. Then her head suddenly bobbed up, her eyes wide open. There was the smell of smoke in the air.

"They're going on to the village," Bruce said, and he and Mary crept along the walls to watch.

The two shadowy forms moved cunningly from rock to rock, on to a protecting clump of bushes; with great caution they slipped back to the shelter of a heap of debris. This hiding-place had once been a kwazz before some clumsy beetle broke it down.

As they came back to this position the pink dawn caught their savage

faces. Mary and Bruce saw them for what they were—inhuman creatures that were a mockery to true men. Green and yellow scales covered their almost naked bodies. Antennae reached up from their foreheads, sensitive to dangers. Evil gleamed in their grotesque faces.

"Yellow eyes," Mary whispered, "yellow feet—only they aren't real feet. The toes are more like eagles' talons."

"Not the sort of people you'd care to meet on a dark night," Bruce muttered. "I wonder what they're carrying in their buckets."

"Fire," said Mary. "I can see the hazy blue smoke."

The two snail-eaters made a dash for it. They headed for the nearest kwazz, one that Bruce remembered as Vammerick's.

"And Vammerick is away!" Bruce said with an angry breath. "That fire will spread to half a dozen kwazzes before anyone can stop it—anyone but me!"

"Where are you going, Bruce?"

"Come on if you want to chase the fire-wagon!"

The two snail-eaters were scampering away by this time, and Bruce knew they would put a safe distance between themselves and the village before they stopped to watch the show.

He crouched to put his shoulder to the chosen pole, forced it with all his strength. The short section at the base snapped and thudded to the ground.

He glanced upward. The rest of the pole stood solid, held by the horizontal stringers. The home-made gateway was open before him, and he lost no time plunging through.

Mary was right behind him. Whatever was to be done, she was bound to help.

The blazes licked up over the front

of the tower-like dwelling. A draft through the open doors carried them fluttering into the interior. Bruce guessed that Vammerick would have to build himself another house, all right.

"Help me with this toadstool, Mary."

THEY threw their weight against the pulpy stalk, once, twice, three times—and down it went. The wide, top-heavy umbrella crushed down over the flames like wet mush. The whole kwazz shuddered under the impact, and the fire slackened.

Then Bruce and Mary snatched some whips of fleshy green leaves and went into battle. They made a daring rush through the interior. They slapped faster than the flames could climb. Vammerick's house might be saved, after all—the frame-work at least.

The first was quickly beaten down to charred and smoking sticks at the base of the kwazz.

"It's not all out," Bruce said, panting, "but here come the native women to take over. That's our cue."

He caught Mary's hand and they raced away. They took a roundabout course so as not to be seen. Then, watching for the right opportunity, they crept back to the prison wall, drew the section of pole back in place, wedged it and sealed it with clay.

Before that day was over the party of stock-searchers returned.

Excitement ran high through the jungle village as the travelers and the stay-at-homes exchanged their news.

Bruce and Mary waited silently until that night, knowing their patience would be rewarded. Sure enough, Red Mouth came to them at dark and told them everything.

There was much to be told about lost livestock and the mounting accusations of thievery and counter-thievery. The big news, however, concerned the wave

of fire-setting.

"The snail-eaters sent a messenger to us, serving notice that they would burn our village to the ground if we didn't pay them seventy-seven snails as damages for the fires we set."

"So the potato giants started it," said Bruce.

"No, they didn't," said Red Mouth. "They've already held a council. Not one of the potato giants was found guilty. But you can't tell those savage snail-eaters anything. They claim they've had a burn-out and they swear we're going to pay for it."

"All things considered," said Mary, "it looks like war."

"It is war," said Red Mouth. "If things aren't settled to our satisfaction by morning, the march is on."

CHAPTER VI

Red Mouth at the Crossroads

THE whole tribe of potato giants was on the move. There were no fires that night nor the next, for no slippery snail-eater could have sneaked into the village unnoticed. Everyone was stirring, and even the sleepest beetles seemed to sense the excitement in the air.

Moving day was nothing new to these creatures. In certain warm seasons of the past they had lived high up on the ridge trail. The shells of their former villages dotted the trail for a distance of several days' journey. Migrating was a natural part of their existence.

However, migrating down grade was much easier than journeying upward. And more promising, too; for in the past the tribe had encountered some privations in the uplands.

Accordingly, as the potato giants bustled around getting everything loaded, the shiny tan back of every

zwouffer was doubly important.

The snail-eaters who had stolen and eaten some of the younger beetles were doubly damned. And so were Bruce and Mary for having killed one.

Naturally there was some renewed clamor for executions, so that the tribe wouldn't have the bother of taking prisoners along. Red Mouth didn't relay all of this perilous talk to his two fellow humans, but he guessed that they read between the lines.

The consensus of opinion was that the prisoners should be taken on the march. Sooner or later some potato giant, scouting along the ridge, might get into a tight spot with the enemy. Then it would be handy to have some valuables to bargain with, even if they had to be turned at one or two snails apiece.

If the two prisoners fully realized their predicament, Red Mouth thought, it was remarkable that they should continue to be so cooperative.

Yes, here they were making an offer, and a most miraculous one. They boasted that what they had to give might bring a swift victory to the potato giants.

The rumor of this offer echoed through the gathering caravan. These zwouffer-killing strangers were in some respects decent and honorable creatures, like their jumping pet, Red Mouth.

Some of the women added their bit to this rising sentiment by swearing that the prisoners were also to be credited with stopping the fire. No one could explain how they had gotten out of prison and back in again. But they had definitely been seen fire-fighting.

RED MOUTH rejoiced to see these growing sentiments. He wanted Bruce and Mary for friends. Everything was so wonderful since they had

come. He was remembering so many forgotten words and ideas. Feelings of love had returned to his heart, causing him to dance and turn handsprings whenever he thought of this beautiful girl; causing him to stand and talk through the prison walls with her, to try to reach through and touch her hand, and to call her—for reasons he couldn't remember—"Lena."

When Mary would say to him, "Remember, Red Mouth, I'm married to Bruce Devoe. I have taken his name. I am his wife. Don't you remember about love and marriage?" Red Mouth would shake his head stubbornly. He didn't want to remember anything that would make him admit she belonged to Bruce.

"Maybe you will escape to go back home," Red Mouth would say. "And maybe I will go, too. And maybe Bruce won't escape."

This was something that Red Mouth never said the second time because it brought such a horrified expression to Mary's pretty face. It even made her cry, and that left Red Mouth very much ashamed and quite lonely.

He tried to make amends for that remark by saying, "I only said maybe. We never know who will escape and who will die."

This helped not at all, and so, henceforth, he weighed his words more carefully.

The honeymooners' popularity was not so great that anyone considered setting them free. In fact, there were those who disparaged the rumored acts of favor.

Rippyck, for example, had no good words to say for their fire-fighting. He observed gruffly that that rickety old kwazz of Vammerick's deserved to be burned down, and several other kwazzes with it. He also voiced strong arguments against accepting the cou-



An angry discussion went on as to what to do with her

ple's offer to help win a quick victory.

"We can spare no beasts of burden to lift sunken kwazzes out of the swamps. It's easier to build new kwazzes."

Vammerick and Red Mouth and several others argued the point with him. Vammerick declared that this kwazz in the swamp was not just an

ordinary dwelling place but one that could travel.

"Any kwazz will travel if enough zwouffers pull it," said Rippyick with authority.

"But this one," Red Mouth said, "will travel with its own strength. It will go much faster than the fastest beetle."

"If it can travel from its own strength," said Rippyick, "why doesn't it crawl out of the swamp by itself? Why must it have zwouffers to pull it out?"

"It is so strong," said Red Mouth, "that it would break in two if it jumped out of the swamp by itself!"

"Then it has no judgment," said Rippyick, gazing solemnly through his projecting owl eyes. "The stupidest beetle knows better than to break itself in two."

The whole caravan was delayed while the debate ensued. All points of comparison between the slow but dependable beetle and the speedy but senseless space ship were duly considered. When it was insisted that all the space ship needed was a smooth track for starting, Rippyick and his friends grew more doubtful than ever. The ridge trails were even rougher than those of the swamp.

As for the claim that this ship, once given a chance to start, would move through the air without even touching the ground, that was simply unbelievable. Even Red Mouth, with all his jumping antics, had to keep bouncing back to the ground. And this ship was sure to be much heavier.

THE talk stopped short when a young potato giant came racing down the ridge trail on a swift young beetle bearing fearful news.

"The snail-eaters are already a half-day's journey ahead of us!"

The cry rang out from one end of the caravan to the other.

"They are ahead of us. And they are crossing to our side and felling trees across our trail!"

The caravan went into motion, full speed ahead. Rippyick made his two prisoners fast among his packs on the back of a husky beetle.

However, a few members of the tribe chose another direction. Red Mouth smeared a fresh stripe of red clay around his lips and bounded up on Vammerick's shoulders, aboard a trusty zwouffer. They and a few others headed for the swamps.

Hours later they arrived there. But

they didn't find any space ship nosing up out of the mud. Instead, they found another human being, a rather pompous-looking individual, who was standing on the bank looking dolefully at the water.

Red Mouth succeeded in getting a few unhappy words out of this stranger. His name was Major Vickering. He had come to Mercury with Bruce and Mary. In recent hours he had completed the hike down to this mud bank to see about recovering the space ship.

He had found the ship beyond recovery.

"She has just sunk from sight," said Major Vickering. "If you'll look beyond that patch of marsh grass you'll see the last ten inches of her nose under five feet of water. The rest of her is down in a couple hundred feet of mud. And she's still sinking."

CHAPTER VII

Vision of a Colony

"SO THIS is Mercury as the tourist sees it," said Bruce, rolling his eyes at Mary.

She blew him a kiss. It was the only way she could deliver it, though he was only three feet away. For both she and her husband were tied hand and foot. They were lying on their backs among the luggage that Rippyick had stacked and bound to this beast of burden.

The Mercury scenery that they could see from this angle was sky, sky, and more sky. Occasionally they passed under overhanging branches. But the trees were becoming fewer and scrubbier. The trail was gathering altitude.

Some of the scenery they couldn't see, but could hear in the exclamations of the potato giants, consisted of logs and rocks that the enemy had thrown

across their trail. Sometimes a small avalanche would block the way, and there would be a brief delay while the drivers tried for some more effective profanity to keep the beasts moving.

"I think this is our initiation into the tribe," said Bruce. "They're making mashed potatoes out of us."

"Baked, if you ask me," said Mary, "the way that sun is cooking us."

"Enjoying the ride otherwise? Remind me that I won't have to take you to Coney Island."

"I'm not sure" said Mary, "whether you're cracking wise or you're just feverish with the heat."

"Seasickness," said Bruce, "aboard the good ship Zwouffer."

Rippyick didn't like to have them saying things he couldn't understand. He rode his mount alongside and shouted angrily. Bruce commented that any steamboat had to whistle now and then. Mary smiled and they fell silent.

With the darkness came a night of camping in one of the old empty villages. To the honeymooners' intense relief there was a high-walled prison. Nothing could have been more welcome after the long, torturing hours in bonds.

With the darkness came Red Mouth, also.

The news which he bore, however, was so bad that they couldn't talk about it. It would seem that all hope was at an end. The ship was gone.

"I also met your friend, Major Vickering," said Red Mouth. "He is following us at a safe distance. He says there is nothing else for him to do. But he still hopes he might find a way back to civilization."

"Hope and I are no longer on speaking terms," Mary murmured.

"Hope is dead," said Bruce.

"I will tell you more tomorrow," said Red Mouth.

THE following night brought a conference of the four. Major Vickering, with Red Mouth's assistance, had dared to venture into the camp to the darkest corner of the makeshift prison. The Major was in a mood to talk, for once, and what he had to say caused Mary's cheeks to burn.

"Your father did send me," Vickering admitted. "He planned for me to stow away on your ship. He wanted to know whether the resources of some of these unexplored regions would be good investments."

Bruce questioned him sharply. "Did you have orders to throw a monkey-wrench to force us down? . . . Did you? . . . Did Mary's father command that low-down trick?"

"I'm afraid that was my own idea," said Major Vickering. "You had already played havoc with my plans—"

"The next time you'll do well to straighten out your plans before we start."

"Next time!" Mary echoed bitterly. There was a heavy silence.

From the surrounding camp came the lusty snores of the potato giants, sleeping like the dead. It would have been no trick to escape them. Mary and Bruce knew that.

But to escape the giants only to fall into the hands of the snail-eaters would be jumping from the frying-pan into the fire.

In their private discussions they had pondered the possibility of gambling on their popularity with the giants, to gain the same advantages that Red Mouth had won for himself. They, too, might become the pets of these creatures. Then, as travel to the Mercury space ports became more common, some year there would be further explorations and they would be found.

Now Major Vickering himself brought up the same idea.

"Rescue might come eventually, if we made up our minds to live here a matter of years," he said.

Bruce said emphatically, "That's not for Mary and me. You can stay and live a hermit's life if you want to."

"I didn't say I'd relish it," the Major grumbled. "All I say is, if we're stuck, we're stuck. There are four of us, if you'd put in with us Red Mouth. We could find some favorable land to cultivate. We'd be far enough away from these damned giants so that they'd never bother to trail us. Isn't that possible, Red Mouth?"

"Possible? Anything is possible."

"Red Mouth, you know the dangers of this world. You could be the guard," said Vickering. "And you, Bruce, you're young and husky. You could till the soil for us. Mary, you could cook."

"What would you do?" said Bruce.

"I'm a business man" said Vickering. "Naturally the executive responsibilities would fall to me, since there has to be a leader."

BRUCE gave a sarcastic grunt. Mary stared into the darkness. Through the cracks between wall stakes she could see only the outlines of Red Mouth and the Major against the stars. It was easy to imagine the Major's arrogant expression.

"It would be the beginning of a colony," the Major went on. "It wouldn't be as if we were four hermits. We'd be a society all our own. With one woman among us we could have a common family life."

"Why, you damned rat!" Bruce snarled. "If this wall wasn't between us I'd smash your face."

"I'll smack him for you," Red Mouth volunteered.

"Hey, don't get me wrong!" the Major yelped.

Smack! Thud! Whack! Pop!

Mary could see the dark blurs that were Red Mouth's swinging fists. The Major went down, rolled over, crawled to his hands and knees, and then got up to run.

"Stop it," Bruce commanded. "Come back here, both of you. You'll have the whole camp awake."

They came back to the prison wall like two truant schoolboys.

"Thanks, Red Mouth," Bruce said quietly.

"The pleasure was all mine," said Red Mouth. "But I still don't know why you wanted him smacked."

"It was all a mistake," the Major whimpered. "I'm not in love with Bruce's wife."

"Aren't you?" said Red Mouth innocently. "That's funny. I—"

"Shut up, both of you," Bruce snapped. "And no more talk about a colony. Mary and I have already decided what we'd do if worst came to worst. Now it's come, so we're doing it."

"What's your plan?" asked the Major.

"We'll take our chance against slow death," said Bruce. "We'll travel to the summit of the ridge with these giants and then we'll keep going, on the straightest course we can cut. Somewhere halfway around this world there's a patch of civilization with a space port and Earthbound ships."

The Major refrained from comment. Anything he might say about an impossible journey would only accentuate his own guilt.

As if to break the heavy silence, he said, "Damn you, Red Mouth! My eye is swelling shut."

There was another silence.

"We'd better sleep," Mary said. "It isn't long until Rippyick binds us and throws us onto the beetle. I'm glad I

don't know how far we have to go."

"There's a short cut along the ridge," said Red Mouth. "I remember it."

"Your memory is improving," Bruce observed.

"I came over it myself. It was easy."

"How easy?" said Bruce.

"As easy as a flat trail. And lots more fun. I picked it out myself. Do you want to try it?"

Three days later the four of them, together with Rippyick and six of his giant friends, branched off on a trail of higher elevation than the main trail.

Five days later Red Mouth and his three human companions were two miles in the lead of Rippyick and his party of six.

Three days later the going had become so difficult that Rippyick turned back. His prisoners, still accompanied by Red Mouth, were three or four miles ahead.

Mary, looking back over the trail, saw her captors turn to retrace their course. It was an hour for celebration.

"We've done it!" she cried. "We've outdistanced them. They've given up following."

Bruce held her in his arms. She could read the warning in his expression. The trail was growing worse hourly, and he seemed weighed down by the thought that no real victory had been won. This was only the starting point.

However, he shared her happy mood. No longer prisoners in fetters, they were apparently as free as the birds. Red Mouth and Vickering joined them in a Feast of Freedom, and all quarrels were forgotten.

"We don't know where we're going, but we're on our way," Mary sang.

Bruce and Major Vickering caught up the tune. They all sang. And Red Mouth walked on his hands, danced on his hands, and turned cartwheels.

Everyone was happy except the pack beetle, who gazed sad-eyed at the rocky trail ahead and scratched his head thoughtfully with his front foot.

CHAPTER VIII

Fugitives on the Divide

NEVER once did Mary relax her suspicions of her traveling companions. Major Vickering had demonstrated that he was thoroughly unprincipled. He was keeping in line only because Bruce forced him to do so. Bruce had a physical and moral strength that stood as her constant protection.

On the surface, however, everything ran smoothly. Now that they had lost Rippyick, perhaps for good, they laughed and joked—very much like one happy family.

Red Mouth recounted some of his mischievous tumbling tricks that had kept the potato giants on their mettle.

Major Vickering repeated a story he had told before, about his favorite hoax on the public. He had never been in the army. He had acquired the title in a lodge play. As a nickname it had proved such an advantage that he had worked it on the public wherever he went.

"Your father fell for it like a ton of bricks," the Major guffawed. "That's why he hired me in the first place."

Everyone laughed, Mary included.

Bruce added to the fun by giving an imaginary account of the rent-a-space-ship agent setting out to find his lost property and tracing it to the bottom of a bottomless swamp.

Then they got off on a rehash of their cleverness in getting Rippyick to take the short cut with them.

But this line of conversation changed the mood from comedy to more sober-

ing thoughts. As Mary well knew, they had chosen a course that very nearly followed the very backbone of the ridge. Somewhere on the south slope of that divide the snail-eaters were also marching.

And so they were ostensibly a scouting party. It was with this function in mind that Rippyick had been persuaded to try this upper trail. He had brought his pack beetle with the prisoners because they were his property and he was afraid to trust them to soft-hearted fellows like Vammerick.

And then, suppose some snail-eaters should be met, face to face, and should try to do Rippyick injury. What could be simpler than to buy them off with three or four snails' worth of good food, bound hand and foot?

Thus Rippyick had been persuaded to bite off more mountain trail than he could chew. The nimble Red Mouth, jumping and running alongside the pack beetle, had excited it just enough to keep it gaining ground. Once well ahead, he had turned a deaf ear to the commands from the rear to wait for the rest of the party.

The scouting duties had proved to be simple. The snail-eaters were far enough ahead so that there were no encounters. Red Mouth had only to wave a branch from time to time as a signal to the caravan on the lower trail that all was well.

Now Mary and her good husband and their two fellow-travelers finished their feast and made ready to start on. They repacked their supply of food. They discarded some of Rippyick's surplus luggage. The large, coarsely woven, red sleeping mat was much too large and heavy for anyone's use but a giant's. The faithful beetle seemed glad to be relieved of it and heaved its back with a gesture of a friendly thank you.

THE caravan could be seen plodding along an indistinct trail two miles down the mountainside. Major Vickering waved a branch for several minutes and finally got an answering wave from the head of the procession.

Everything packed, Red Mouth drew himself up proudly, called the signal and marched ahead. He was a picturesque figure, as Mary often observed. He was slender, well muscled, and quite handsome in spite of the absurd ring of red clay he insisted on wearing around his mouth. He wore no shoes. On the belt of his ragged trunks, his only garment, he always wore that odd-shaped brass and steel ornament, a reminder of some former contact with a civilization that he couldn't remember.

He pranced ahead with the air of a drum major. Suddenly, as Mary watched him, she knew what he was.

Of course, it was all so obvious. Why hadn't she thought of it before?

The discovery excited her and she started to tell Bruce.

"Would you like to know, dear, what Red Mouth's life was like before he came to Mercury, while he lived on the Earth?"

Bruce answered carelessly, "I wasn't aware that you and Red Mouth had been carrying on any private conversations about your former lives."

"But we haven't," Mary said, suddenly on the defensive. "I really don't know. I was just curious—"

Bruce wasn't looking at her. His eyes were searching the trail far ahead. Mary thought it best to say nothing more. She certainly didn't want Bruce to feel that she had any interest in Red Mouth.

And then she wondered. Suppose Bruce were already jealous of this jumping-jack's obvious attraction to her. What could she do?

"He's taking us into a maze of trouble," said Bruce. "Do you see what he's doing, Mary?"

"What do you mean?" A note of alarm was in her voice.

"See those ragged rocks and cliffs we're getting into?"

"Oh, that," said Mary, suddenly relieved.

"What did you think I meant?"

"I was afraid you might be losing your trust in him," she said.

"When it comes to that, Vickering is the one I mistrust," said Bruce. "But I can see from here we'll never get this beetle across the next mile of travel. Red Mouth thought this trail was easy because he's a first cousin to a flea. If there's anything you want off the beetle's back, we'd better remove it now."

A few minutes later the trouble Bruce had predicted was at hand.

The beetle got a front foot caught in a crevice between rocks. Vickering thought the beast was stalling, and he shouted at it with a vengeance. The beast lurched forward before anyone had a chance to stop it. The foot was torn off.

"Bad," said Red Mouth. "Very bad."

He wasn't explicit as to whether he meant the luck or the Major's rashness.

The limping beetle was quite excited and difficult to control. They finally succeeded in removing some more baggage. The remainder they repacked to the rear, away from the injured foot.

TO MARY'S surprise she found herself feeling very sympathetic toward this great, dumb creature, probably a younger brother to the one that had once nearly bitten her head off. It's all in what you get used to, she thought. She had learned that there were safe ways and unsafe ways to deal with Mercury's peculiar livestock.

Just now, however, all the rules were breaking down. The crippled beast went panicky and ran pell-mell over a cliff. There was a dull crushing sound that welled up from the depths. In that moment the luckless beetle gave his all.

The party proceeded on foot, with much less surplus baggage to trouble them.

It soon became apparent that the Major was going to miss the beetle more than anyone. The party had noticed that he had taken considerable care of the goods, often climbing aboard the beast to rearrange or fasten down some bit of equipment. Now it was plain that these actions had been for the purpose of saving his own feet. He began to lag.

Mary saw him stop to adjust his binoculars. Again he was focussing on the caravan two miles below without bothering to signal.

This action was another trick of delay. It was the Major's way of resting.

Red Mouth and Bruce exchanged glances.

"That's three times in the last half hour," Bruce mentioned, "that we've stopped to check up on the caravan. They'll be getting ahead of us."

"I was trying to discover whether Rippyick got back to the others safely," said the Major.

As if anyone cared about the fate of such a spiteful lout as Rippyick. Mary and Bruce, from then on, didn't bother to stop and wait for the Major. They moved ahead at all possible speed.

Red Mouth skipped along, first ahead, then behind, then out to one side to gather some edible roots and berries so that lunch could be eaten without a stop.

What eventually stopped the party was a chasm. Heat and cold had

cracked this gigantic mountain rock, and the deep break cut squarely across the path of their progress.

Mary wondered. The demon of suspicion and jealousy was always cropping up.

Suppose Red Mouth knew that Bruce couldn't make such a jump. Would he urge the action anyway? The drop would be at least five hundred feet.

Looking down the line of the chasm in either direction, they could see the desirability of taking a chance. At least a half day's walk would be required to get around this hazard if they could not jump it.

"I'll help you over, Mary," Red Mouth said. Instantly he picked her up in his strong arms, ran three steps and leaped.

Mary caught her breath. The chasm was flying past, then the rock's edge was under Red Mouth's feet. She was safely on the other side. And in her throat there was a stifled scream. Somehow she had remained silent, and now she looked up at Red Mouth in wonderment for what he had done.

Then she glanced back at Bruce. He was staring, perhaps with anger for Red Mouth's rashness, perhaps with jealousy. But he was determined that this game would not be lost by him. He came running like an eagle about to take off from its nest. He quickened his stride just before he reached the edge, and then Mary did scream. Her vision in that split second was too horrifying. Her eyes tried to shut out the sight.

THE leap was short. His toes reached for the edge but slipped off. Only his arms in a mad scramble caught him. For an instant he hung there. A slight rolling of pebbles under him—or a slight push—could have thrown him

down to death.

Red Mouth reached him instantly, grabbed him by the hair and clothing, and hauled him to safety.

He got up and brushed his clothes, and tried to laugh away the alarm in Mary's countenance, the trembling of her body.

"I had to do it," he said. "I knew I'd catch with my hands if my feet missed."

From the other side came the distressed complaint of Major Vickering. "What about me?"

"You'd better cut down to the other trail," said Red Mouth. "You're not going to make this one, I can tell you that right now. Here's a good enough place for you to hike down. You'll make it if you take your time."

"Help me over this ditch," said the Major sullenly. "You're not going to leave me to be pawned off by those giants."

"If you'll make the jump, we'll try to catch you," said Red Mouth. "How else can we help?"

They argued about the matter and considered trying a very risky plan. They would make a rope of their clothes and throw to him.

Red Mouth wore so little clothing that he refused to volunteer anything. The belt with the single metal ornament was something not to be loaned to either strangers or friends.

But Bruce's trousers and the Major's, knotted together would make a life-line three yards long, assuming that the Major could first throw his garment safely across the chasm.

"What am I supposed to do while all this goes on?" Mary asked.

As the plan went, the free end of the line was to be thrown out to the Major as he leaped, after the other end had been made secure on Bruce's side of the chasm.

"I'll walk on ahead," Mary volunteered. "The path looks perfectly clear for a full mile ahead."

"Watch for crevices," Bruce warned; and Red Mouth added that there would be more like this one but much narrower and less dangerous.

So as the men went to their task of making a line, Mary hiked on ahead.

Within a short time she saw she was coming to another chasm. It was narrow, however, one that a lazy beetle might walk across without noticing. She paused and glanced back wondering whether the others were coming.

She saw that they were still at the same station, still with their clothes on, talking and gesturing. Evidently the Major had cold feet and was trying to work out a better plan.

Mary hesitated, wondering whether she should go back to them. The walk ahead was an easy one, down grade, all in the clear. She might as well cross and go ahead.

She edged toward the chasm to see how deep it was.

There was a slight rustle of noise, a little like rapid footsteps. She looked around. It must have come from down there—though not far down. It was like the close echoes of faraway sounds that you hear when you put a seashell to your ear.

"I won't go on," she murmured. "I'll wait—"

There it came again, a pattering like rabbits' feet. Could it be—

"Oh! Oh!"

THE horrifying reality rose before her eyes like ogres springing out of a cauldron. Three snail-eaters bounded up out of the chasm. They seized her, slapped hands over her mouth to stifle her scream, and carried her away down a steep incline hidden within the dark chasm wall.

CHAPTER IX

The Beating of Hands

A PRISONER! Worse—a plaything in the hands of murderous, snail-eating monsters, hideous freaks that thought of human beings in the same class with snails and worms and toads!

The horror was redoubled at every thought. There was no way for Bruce to guess what had happened. He would think she had hiked on. He would wonder why he didn't find her. He might go on and on for miles . . . and then?

Then he would retrace his weary steps to look for some sign of her having taken the wrong course. All in all he might go mad trying to account for her.

If she only could have left some sign, some mark on the stone, a handkerchief, a sprig of foliage pointing—

If only she hadn't walked ahead. She was angry at having had a sense of modesty; it was mockery that her habits from civilization should be her undoing here in the Mercury wilderness.

Then she thought of Major Vickers and her heart smouldered with hate. He had been at the bottom of all their troubles, right from the start. And still, simply because he was a human being like themselves, he had been dealt favors and given one chance after another to come back into the fold of fair play.

What a strange thing it was, Mary thought, that human beings should go to such great pains to deal with each other on a friendly basis, even when the underlying evil of a person may be as well known as his face.

How much worse, Mary wondered, could these snail-eating fiends be than some human beings who played their

fellows false?

The two ugly creatures who were leading her by the hand down this stony path had cruel and lustful faces. One of them had a pair of antennae rising out of his forehead; one had eyes and ears like a vampire bat.

These three creatures—the third was tagging along, clapping his great crusty hands together with each step—must have come from a strange breed of animal, partly monster, partly human. All three of them had the toes of huge birds, talons that clicked along over the stones like a number of clocks ticking in rhythm. All of them were partly naked, and the yellow and green scales covering their shoulders and back seemed to cast a light around them as the chasm path grew darker.

The daylight was now only a narrow jagged strip of white high above their heads. This descent had already taken them too far to be seen from the top, in the event that Bruce might be looking down for her.

She persuaded her captors to stop while she adjusted her shoe. The tacks were crowding their way up through the half-heel that remained. The days of rough hiking were playing havoc with her clothing.

About two hours later she arrived at what was evidently a snail-eater camp. It was well concealed in a dark cavern with huge stalactites and stalagmites to lend a weird grandeur to the scene.

They tied her to an upright stake in a lonely section of the cave, and for a time she was forgotten.

The jabber of these creatures was something to hear. There were hundreds of them gathered in this temporary stopping place, and they were all talking at once. The chief excitement was the news from the surface. A new band of scouts came back from some observation point with the warn-

ing that they were in danger of being passed by beetle-riding giants.

MARY listened intently. There was just enough of the potato giant in their language to enable her to keep up with the topic of conversation. But the details were too swift and too cluttered with excited words for her to be sure of them.

Her impression was that they expected the human scouts to be delayed by her capture. And so they were. They were still unaccountably stalled at a certain chasm—with the exception of one, who was racing around like a bee-stung frog searching for this lost girl.

All of which gave this congregation of snail-eaters a chance to rest and to feast upon snails, in order to be fresh for a continued journey through the night.

Mary then understood why there had been no previous encounters with these scaled creatures. Their luminous bodies lighted their way and enabled them to travel in the dark.

A crowd gathered around her after the feasting, and she supposed that her time had come. This was doubtless to be some sort of death ritual.

She stood looking out over the circle of ugly creatures. Her wrists and ankles throbbed from the bonds. She fought her suffering in silence. To cry out with pain might have given these brutes such satisfaction that they would have added torture upon torture to hear her voice. She had not forgotten her vocal experience with the potato giants.

Now she saw that they were not about to kill her; they were talking of selling her at an auction. This most diabolical of all the fiendish forms was evidently her owner. He was scorning the bids from those onlookers who would have liked to buy her. Some, in

their bidding, would make signs with their fingers to indicate how many snails they would give. Others would emphasize their shouting by holding up the payments they could offer—specimens of huge frogs, turtles, over-developed rats, or big, fleshy pea-green worms.

The evil faced owner laughed at this demonstration. He indicated that such bids would be much too low.

There was a call to feast for all the camp and Mary was left alone.

What a strange society. She could see hundreds of these snail-eaters preparing to eat. Curiously they began by clapping their hands in a weird rhythm. There was a meaning to this. She had observed the same action in one of the scouts on the trip down the chasm when there had been talk of food.

And so she knew that it was a gesture akin to licking one's chops or saying "Yum, yum. Food!"

The feast over, many of them again crowded close around her. A few of them opened up with this batting of hands. Was she, then, to be their dessert?

Her owner laughed at them. He made his own gestures and an abrupt speech to say he'd changed his mind; he would not sell after all. At least not today. For now it was time to gather up the goods and move on with speed toward the summit.

IN THE custody of this talon-toed owner Mary made the forced march. Her reluctance was as nothing against the eagerness with which these creatures were pressing toward their goal.

She hated their every look. The more she saw of them the more she was convinced that all their beastliness of scales, talons and inhuman faces and insect feelers were only an embodiment of their very evil natures.

This creature who owned her—could he ever have had a mother? Or ever have offered a prayer? Or ever have had once in a lifetime an emotion of compassion or tenderness? No symptom of goodness could have claimed one of his brutal and bestial character. In his sporting moments he would apply hot coals of fire to live frogs to watch them writhe. Mary would be treated to a sight of the sickening pain in the faces of the animals enduring this treatment.

Once one of the frogs struck at him, and then he ate the two legs off the creature alive.

Perhaps he read the fright in her face as he turned from this gruesome sport. "I will eat you next," he said, and then he laughed and beat his hands together.

CHAPTER X

Mary Is Sold

ANOTHER day's camp brought sale time, and the snail-eaters gathered in and talked in terms of high bids.

From the great stock of worms, rodents and reptiles that they exchanged on this occasion, Mary knew they must have storehouses of slimy things among these mountain caves. The jungle was far away now; but there was an industrious quality about these creatures and they had evidently prepared long in advance for a march along this route.

When the highest bids for Mary were declared, the owner refused them as too low. He would keep her until some of the stolen beetles were sold back to the enemy, whose caravan was known to be not far distant.

"Sell the beetles," was the popular cry of the hour. "Let the giants grub to buy them back."

These creatures knew well the giants'

passion for recovering their lost livestock. There was some question as to whether any giants would desert the march in favor of a trek to the nearest lowlands for more snails and lizards, even to buy back their beetles. But it was worth a try.

Accordingly a small expedition went forth, armed with poison-tipped spears and axes, to take some errant beetles back to market.

Mary overheard one of these say that he knew a certain Rippyck who had promised to exchange a human at any time—that jumping human with the red mouth—for any zwouffer that was returned.

Some of the snail-eaters looked dubious at the mention of the red-mouthed person. He was as active as a wild bird.

These exhibitions of faint-heartedness annoyed Mary's owner; he himself would go with the party.

And so she was left in the charge of another démon with bright scales and a fishy-looking face and a gravel voice that froze her blood every time he spoke.

He didn't beat his hands together at the sight of her, and that was some comfort. He was one of the many who never went through the motions of the feast gestures until the feast was set before them; and this, Mary gradually learned, was the customary practice.

But what he did do was sing, in his horrid gravel voice, with words that must have been inspired by creeping things out of the swamp.

When the beetle-selling expedition returned, Mary could tell it had been a successful venture. There were echoes of resources within grasp that would buy dozens of her.

The beetles had been sold to Rippyck, trailing along at the rear of the potato giant caravan. Mary marvelled that such a transaction could be made

when these enemies were supposedly at war. It was only Rippyck's unaccountable character that could perpetrate such treasonable business.

THE treasure kwazz now lay only three days' journey away. The snail-eaters marched at night; they slept and feasted and bought and sold food in the daytimes. Frequently they would watch Mary as she ate her meals—or refused to eat, as was often the case. They seemed to be measuring her height and her proportions with their eyes.

"How soon," she overheard one of them asking, "will she become as large as a mushroom?"

"She has not been eating so well," said her owner's gravel-voiced assistant. "But wait. I promise you she will become as huge as six mushrooms. That is the way with humans when they eat. Rippyck has told us this."

"Will she not be sold until she is as huge as six mushrooms?" someone asked.

"She will be sold before we march again," said the gravel-voiced assistant, "but she must be paid for as if already six mushrooms big."

At this the potential buyers began to figure whether they would not be buying a whole season's supply of food. At last all the resources of anticipated victory could be figured in the bidding. The auction was on, the bids mounted higher and higher.

The snail-eaters grew excited. Some of them began to beat their hands in rhythm as they shouted their offers.

Suddenly a voice from the outer edge of the group called.

"I have here a prize which matches value for value. I offer you this one for that one."

Everyone turned. Mary's eyes could barely catch the startling sight of these

newcomers. They were Red Mouth and Bruce.

Red Mouth was shouting his offer. Bruce stood before him, hands bound at the small of his back to a vertical spear. A prisoner going to his execution? He looked it. Mary's heart sank. Had Red Mouth betrayed them? Was he, like Rippyick, capable of striking bargains with the enemy? Mary could gladly have dropped away in a dead faint.

But just then Bruce caught her eye. His expression was so slight she couldn't be quite sure at first. Then one of his eyelids flicked at her with a quick message. She knew. They had come for her.

CHAPTER XI

Flying Spears

LET it be a measure of the animal character of these scaled and taloned snail-eaters that they saw nothing but gain in the offer which Red Mouth made. It was, in their gluttonous eyes, simply a trade of one human being for another—a smaller one for a larger one. Was it not always a gain to trade something smaller for something larger?

Perhaps the fact that Red Mouth clutched a ready spear may have had something to do with the snail-eaters' promptness to do business with him. There were many of them, only one of him, true. But Red Mouth's agility was well known, and these creatures had a fearful respect for his uncanny skills. That spear, perhaps tipped with poison, might jump forward into the scales of any one of them. Sudden death was hardly a pleasant thought when one was contemplating a great feast of victory.

With Red Mouth they promptly did business.

"The trade is done," said the gravel voice. "We will accept this big one. We will fatten him until he exceeds the fullness of nine mushrooms. We will not feed him herbs, as we have done with her, but will fatten him quickly on the choicest of pink snails.

Bruce bowed, apparently resigned to his fate.

"Send the girl to me first," said Red Mouth.

"Send the large one over to me," said the gravel voice, beckoning to Red Mouth.

The assembled groups watched nervously, looking from Red Mouth's poised spear to their own gravel-voiced trader. Mary felt the knots being loosened at her wrists and ankles. She was commanded to walk.

She obediently moved toward Red Mouth's corner of the crowd.

"Wait," said the snail-eater suspiciously. "Not another step until the large one comes this way."

Mary stopped, waited keeping her eyes on Bruce hoping for another cue.

Bruce played innocent. All eyes were on him. He took a step toward his new owner. He bore an attitude of servility that might have convinced the snail-eaters, but not Mary. She saw cold defiance back of his feigned cringing.

"Stop!" Red Mouth commanded in the language the snail-eaters could understand. "Before this trade is complete, where did you get this girl? Did you buy her, or did you steal her?"

"She came here willingly," said one of the fiends, and all of them laughed a howling, weird, diabolical laugh.

"You stole her. You have no claim—"

Red Mouth did not bother to finish, for the older snail-eaters had suddenly lost their patience. They leaped up, shouting, "Your spears! Quick, your spears!"

INSTANTLY the faked knot that bound Bruce's hands loosened, his arm swung up free, his hand seized the spear to which he had been bound. He shouted, "Run, Mary, up the path! We're with you!"

Mary ran. She screamed, too, a long and terribly intense scream. Not that she needed to, but because she remembered how it had frozen the giants.

At the same time Red Mouth cried a threat that the first creature who moved out of his tracks would get the poison spear through his body.

He didn't make his bluff good. There was at once a great scampering from the outskirts of the crowd and from the camp beyond.

Bruce and Red Mouth ran, close on the heels of Mary. Neither had hurled his spear. Weapons were too few to be wasted.

Zing! Zing! Zing!

A hail of spears came through the air at them.

"That big rock, Mary," Bruce called. "Get down!"

Mary and her two liberators huddled behind it. One spear chipped the crest of the protecting rock. The others fell short. Then Red Mouth leaped up and hurled his spear. It went straight through a snail-eater's abdomen. A loud gravel voice cried out in pain. Simultaneously Bruce gave his spear all his strength. It struck into the foreranks and pinned two of the fiends together. The phalanx momentarily fell back.

The three humans took that moment for another gain of distance. Up the narrowing path they ran.

Once a spear clipped the edge of Red Mouth's prided belt with the metal ornament. Mary thought for an instant it had run through his body. But the three of them were still running when the pursuers fell back to take stock.

Mary reached the turn where a heap of rounded boulders had temporarily lodged. Like lumbermen releasing logs, she and Bruce and Red Mouth set them off. Down the path they went bouncing. Death went with them. The snail-eaters screamed in their own weird way. They scattered to break new paths in their swarm up the mountainside.

When the three humans reached the top they found tooth-and-nail combats on all sides. The potato giants had closed in on the ridge. The fury of war was on. At the head was the valiant Vammerick, leading ferocious attacks on the floodtide of the smaller creatures. Vammerick was sluggish but not lacking in nerve. Through the thick of the fighting, his old personal enemy Rippyick lagged at the rear of the caravan to watch the stock and keep his eyes open for possible spoils.

Giants fell, it seemed, almost as often as the snail-eaters. The big fellows were rather dependent upon their brute force, swinging right and left with their bare hands. The hideous creatures with the scales were not clever with their poison-tipped spears, but their targets were large. Whenever Mary looked back she would see a massive potato giant reel, lose his balance and slump down.

She was still running at Bruce's side. They were getting away from the fighting, racing toward the summit.

"How are your feet?" Bruce called.

"Killing me. How do you know?"

"You lost a heel," Bruce said, "right at the head of the chasm. Otherwise we mightn't have found that hidden passage. We've been right with you for days, waiting for a break."

"Will we ever get away?" Mary wailed.

"Keep running," said Bruce. "The more they fight, the farther we'll get."

CHAPTER XII

Gift of the Gods

OUT of battle a wounded beetle came zigzagging along crazily, threatening to capsize with every sixth step.

"All aboard," Red Mouth shouted. All three caught the creature on the fly and hooked a short, perilous ride.

"Off!" Red Mouth yelled, and they all bounded off the safe side as the beast went death-diving down the steep mountainside.

"Every little bit helps," Bruce shouted. "Come on, honey. The goal isn't far off."

"The Major?" Mary asked breathlessly.

"He's back in the fray somewhere," said Red Mouth.

"We'll never wait," said Bruce.

As they ran they could hear the big stones go clattering down the south mountain side to impede the advance of more scaled creatures.

"They're stopping to fight it out," Mary called, with a backward glance. Those rolling stones had dealt the mass of snail-eaters a real setback.

"Let them do the fighting," Red Mouth called, "we'll claim the prize. That must be the glorified kwazz straight ahead in that grove."

"It's all ours," said Bruce. For now, from every backward glance it became more evident that the giants were not only winning their fray; they were forcing the snail-eaters to retreat down the mountainside. And the temptation to keep them running was too great. The giants were forgetful of their goal at the summit. Their rules of war had been discarded. They were determined above all to exterminate some of the enemy.

High on a shoulder to the south, a few snail-eaters had broken away

from the main fight to claim their own private success. They were about to isolate a creature of their own size—one with a more perfect human form than theirs.

"The Major!" Mary thought. Somehow before her pity could get a grip on her, she turned her back on the scene.

"At last we walk toward the victory kwazz" Bruce said, looking almost reverently toward the grove.

"They've spoken of it as a recent gift of the gods," said Mary, "though I suppose it was actually built by some of these natives."

"If it turns out to be a musty tower of logs," said Red Mouth, "we'll know it was built by the potato giants."

Red Mouth believed he had never seen this summit. His capricious memory that had been so bright at the beginning of the trail seemed to have reached its limits.

THEY walked into the mountain grove. Their own plan was fixed. They would decorate the door of the kwazz with boughs to show that it was taken in the name of the potato giants.

Then there would be the honey-mooners' chance, not to wait to share the victory, but to race on, and on, and on into the unknown regions beyond, in the hope that somewhere they would find their way to a space port.

"Luck has favored you," said Red Mouth, "in giving you this many paces ahead of your captors. This time you must not wait for the Major. To do so would throw away your chance. Every foot of distance you place between yourselves and this grove of trees on the summit will be a lasting barrier between yourselves and the fate you have escaped."

"Are you going to come with us?" Bruce asked.

"I haven't decided," said Red Mouth. They saw him look from one to the other of them, as if unsure of their wishes. He seemed to be asking, had he or had he not won their trust? "Are you inviting me to on with you?"

"That is for Bruce to say," said Mary.

"Red Mouth, I wonder if you are not in love with my wife."

"I think I am," Red Mouth said. "She is so much like—like someone I've forgotten. Please forgive me."

"I admire you," said Bruce, placing a hand on Red Mouth's shoulder. "You have seen us through dangers. I hope you will go on with us, not only as we search for the space port, but all the way back to the Earth to be our friend."

Mary could have kissed Bruce with all her heart for those words. She could see the light of appreciation in Red Mouth's eyes. And in his own way he expressed that appreciation. He jumped up, kicked his heels together, and turned cartwheels.

Then he stood on his head. And as he was looking backward, his expression changed to surprise.

"The Major! There he goes!"

Mary turned, looked back across to the shoulder a half mile distant. Four snail-eaters were up on the Major. They tightened ropes on his hands and feet and rushed him down over the slope. They were beating their arms in a rhythm that meant food.

"On to the kwazz," Red Mouth yelled.

"On to the kwazz," Bruce echoed.

They could see its dark form now. Mary's first impression was that it was dark and smooth and sphere-shaped. But from a different angle they saw it was long and cigar-shaped like a space ship. Its sides were glistening with a metallic lustre.

It was a space ship!

THAT opening in the grove of trees had been broken through by its landing on this summit. Three or four seasons' growth had sprung up since the break-through. And so it was apparent the ship had been simply sitting here all this time.

This was the summit. Beyond, the mountain broke off abruptly above a two-mile-deep valley. On the edge the ship stood poised.

"Whoopee!" Bruce cried out. "Whoopee!" He caught Mary and Red Mouth by the hands and together they ran forward. "Whoopee!"

"What?" said Red Mouth. "Are you calling me by my real name?"

"Whoopee?" Mary echoed. That word had struck a fire a few times before. Now it seemed to set Red Mouth aflame with forgotten memories. He answered excitedly.

"Not Whoopie—Hoopie! That's me! Of course it's me. I'm Hoopie Joe, the circus clown. I could flipflop through more hoops of fire than any clown in the business. That was it. They were bringing us up to Mercury to the space ports to put on an exhibition of Earth skill. Lena and I were—"

Red Mouth broke off very much startled by what was suddenly flooding back into his memory. Mary and Bruce stopped and stared at him.

"Lena," he said quietly. "Lena . . . She was lovely—like you, Mary."

They looked across into the grove to where he was looking. There were several mounds of stone.

"It was an awful accident," Red Mouth said. "A sudden stop that was like a crash. We were in the middle of a forced landing. Through the clouds we saw this abrupt drop too late. The pilot barely touched the warning bell . . . then . . . it's too terrifying. My memory—"

"Don't think of it," said Mary.

"Somehow I was able to throw myself away from the wall just in time to escape death. The others weren't so lucky. I must have walked around for days and days with the fires of pain in my skull. I hardly knew what I was doing, as I buried the others. But that is all past. Listen . . ."

"They're coming," said Mary. "It's some of the giants . . . marching . . . victorious."

"Don't wait for them," said Red Mouth. "Here. This is the master key that makes the ship yours . . . I remember!"

He took the brass and steel ornament from his belt and placed it in Bruce's hand.

"Don't stand there dreaming," Red Mouth said sharply. "There's nothing wrong with the ship. It was left in perfect condition. Don't you understand? It's yours."

BRUCE turned the key in the outer door of the airlocks. The door opened. Mary stepped in. Bruce followed, then turned around.

"Come on, Hoopy Joe, you're going back with us."

The circus clown shook his head. "Thank you, no. Not without Lena . . . Goodbye."

Bruce shook his hand. Mary kissed him on the painted red mouth. "We'll

never forget you, Red Mouth," she said.

They hurried to the control room and touched the levers. They plunged off into the sky.

Bruce throttled down to an air-cruising speed and circled to come up over the same long ridge trail.

They caught a glimpse of one small isolated group of snail-eaters, no longer trying to win the race to the summit, but settling down around a private feast, at a safe distance from their giant enemies.

"We'll have to tell your father," said Bruce, "that the Major stayed to keep another appointment."

A little farther on they floated over the summit. Potato giants looked very tiny, staring up at them in bewilderment. Vammerick rode at the head of the procession now, waving with triumphant little gestures. For the moment the victory march came to a stop as the beetles responded to some deep instinct of curiosity. They twisted their dark heads. Did they realize that the prize of their long journey had suddenly leaped off into the skies?

All this amazement must have delighted Red Mouth's clownish heart. The last that Mary and Bruce saw of him, he was performing a series of merry flipflops right over the giants' heads.

THE END

★ STRICTLY BETWEEN MINDS ★

TELEPATHY is a subject which most scientists repudiate, for this amazing phenomena whereby some people claim to use their minds in the way most of us use the telephone to communicate, has no explanation in known facts. Yet, Luther Burbank, the horticultural genius and a scientist beyond repute, leaves written evidence that he not only believed in, but actually practiced the art of telepathy. The following statement is quoted verbatim:

"I inherited my mother's ability to send and receive telepathic communication. So did one of my sisters. In tests before representatives of the University of California, she was able seven times

out of ten to receive messages sent to her telepathically.

"My mother was in poor health during the last years of her life. During these years I often wished to summon my sister. On such occasions I never wrote, telephoned or telegraphed her. Instead, I sent messages telepathically. Each time she arrived at my home in Santa Rosa, California, promptly on the next train."

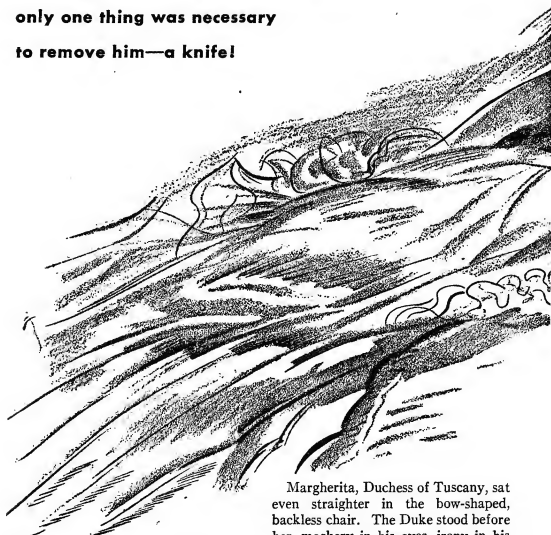
Burbank died in 1926. Perhaps, this man who was able to do magic with plant life, was also able to perform miracles in the paths of the mind, sending messages by telepathy.

—R. Clayton.

The GIFT

By Berkeley Livingston

**Only one thing stood in the way to a life
of utmost luxury—her husband. And
only one thing was necessary
to remove him—a knife!**



"REALLY, my dear," Duke Benetto said. "You have shown deplorably bad taste. And worse, bad judgment."

Margherita, Duchess of Tuscany, sat even straighter in the bow-shaped, backless chair. The Duke stood before her, mockery in his eyes, irony in his manner. The fingers of his right hand toyed with the jeweled hilt of a dagger thrust into the belt holding his doublet. His eyes gleamed in icy passion.



She gazed with utmost horror at the dagger plunged into the pillow

"They *dare* to . . .!"

"Dare?" Benetto said softly. "There is no daring in the commonplace. Your infidelity is a matter of casual talk among the villagers. Like the love Father Simplicimus has for the grape. And perhaps as amusing.

"Indeed, I find it droll, that when I chance to meet one of the men from the

village, he deems it necessary to give my forehead a surreptitious glance. To see whether or not it has sprouted horns."

Margherita could barely contain the hatred which had swelled within her breast. But she knew that if she didn't, if she gave way to recriminations, he would feel that he had, at last, won a

victory over her.

Her features, the loveliest in all Italy, became composed. Slender fingers, on whose whiteness barely discernible veins traced a blue pattern, reached to the bound mass of hair, the color of spun gold, and tucked a straying tendril into place. Her eyelids drooped over eyes as gray and frigid as the glacial ice which showed on the cap of nearby Mont Torno.

"My dear," she began. And her voice was once more that soothing, melodious unguent which had once intrigued him, but now only irritated. "Surely you don't believe the gossiping tongues of the villagers? Having so little to do, they must invent something to give spice . . ."

"Invent," he broke in. And laughed. And the harshness of that sudden, unexpected sound told her more than words could of the scorn he felt for her. "Would that it were! But even he boasts of it! That weasel spawn! *Carlos of Burgundy*, he calls himself, as if it were a title granted . . . pfaw!" He spat in disgust. Then he began a hurried, jerky pacing, back and forth before her. Words, like stinging barbs, struck against the armor of her indifference. "And you! Lombard princess. Circe, who must have traffic with swine! Not content with forging the cuckold's crown for me, you hold rendezvous with my enemy and plot my downfall. Why? Are you not content with your lot?"

Her lips, the key to her character, thin, and bloodless, drooped at the corners, thin, scimitar-lines of flesh. She knew she had won, however hollow the victory. He had broken before her.

"CONTENT?" the soft voice mocked him. "With this stone trap, perched like an eagle's nest on a precipice? With these peasants for servants?

A land of milk and honey, you once called it, remember? This rocky, barren hillside?

"Three years now, I've lived here, hated and scorned by those louse-ridden serfs in the village below. I, Margherita, the most beautiful woman in all Italy. And what have *you* given me? Promises! Jewels, honors, gowns, the homage due me? Where are the courtiers and where the court? Bah! The village priest and the garlic-stinking owners of the three farms nearby are the courtiers. And this draughty mausoleum is my palace. Content, you ask?"

He had stopped his nervous pacing, as she had begun to talk. Now, he stood silent before her. The mocking light had gone from his eyes leaving them terribly empty. And his tall, strongly built figure drooped with a tiredness that was foreign to it. Softly, almost gently, he made reply:

"Even if what you say is true, would it still make right the wrong you have done? You know I am making alliance with the House of Savoy. And that Prince Umavego plans to make war against the Venetians.

"Only you knew that. But now Carlos knows. And soon, the Venetians will know. I would have been . . . Tell me, Margherita; what did Carlos promise you that you betrayed me with so little compunction?"

She sat silent. It was as if she hadn't heard him.

His mouth twisted in a snarl. But no words came forth. Instead, he whirled and snatching a cape from a low stool nearby, ran from the room as if pursued by the devil.

She continued to sit, for several moments, lost in thought, her brow furrowed. Then her brow cleared in decision and arising, she walked to the door and called:

"Vanetta!"

A girl no larger than a child stole into the room. Great, violet-colored eyes looked with fear-filled gaze at her mistress.

Margherita spoke to the girl, but her eyes, narrowed in some inner thought, looked beyond the small, shrinking figure.

"Go," she said, "to the inn of Rudolpho. There you will see one they call the 'Barrel.' Summon him to my side."

The girl stole wraith-like from the room.

BERARDO SCARPA, the Barrel, paused uncertainly beside the door. An aura compounded of garlic and wine enveloped him. He swayed on slightly unsteady legs and looked with suspicion at the darkened bulk of the great stone house. He had seen, as he ascended the steep path leading to the Ducal palace, that one of the leaded, stained glass windows showed a diffused colored light. The Duchess Margherita was waiting for him, then.

"Now why," he asked himself, "does the high and mighty lady want me to come to her? At this hour? What..."

The night wind, chill and damp, struck with a penetrating cold. Yet it was not the cold which made him draw the threadbare cape close around the thick shoulders. Rather it was some inward chill, some strange fancy, some play of, as he thought, the supernatural, which made the house assume a spectral shape, threatening and fearsome.

Then the moon came from behind a cloud and softened the harsh lines of the landscape; banished from Berardo's mind the fancies which had taken hold. Muttering a curse, he banged loudly with the iron knocker.

Silence gave him mute answer.

Again he hammered at the door. And

this time there was a reply to his pounding. The door opened a crack; then it swung wide. A voice low and melodious, said: "Enter."

Berardo, on seeing the vision of loveliness which had confronted him, hastily removed the dirt-encrusted cap he wore and bobbed his mop of unkempt hair several times. He kept his head lowered, but the narrow, muddy-colored eyes in their sea of red veins gave her sly glances.

Her nose wrinkled in disgust as she caught a whiff of the combination of wine and garlic. Then she turned on her heel and moving in the direction of her room said:

"In here."

He waited, a stolid, patient beast of a man, for her bidding.

She regarded him intently, mentally summing up his good points against the deficiencies she knew he possessed. But she knew that he would do for her what she wanted. It was sheer luck that made her remember that Carlos had used him once, for precisely the same purpose she intended.

He stood, head and shoulders bowed, a lump of a man. She saw his hands kneading the cloth of his cap, and shuddered inwardly at the sight of the stubby, grimy fingers, with their hidden strength. They could strangle one so easily. Or use a stiletto with the same ease as a cook using a carving knife. Then, repressing a shudder, she came to the point.

"I—have work for you..."

He said nothing.

"Fifty gold florins, if you do the work well."

He rolled his eyes. Fifty florins. A veritable fortune. Then suspicion clouded his eyes.

"Aye," he muttered. "It is a great deal. What does the great lady desire of Berardo?"

SHE moved to a cabinet of rosewood and opening a drawer took from it an oblong box. Bringing it to him, she opened the catch and showed him the contents—a dagger with a hilt of pure gold and bearing an intricate and beautiful design.

"Tomorrow night, the Duke goes to visit Father Simplicimus. The way is dark. He will leave at a late hour and he will be a little lost in wine."

He retreated in fright.

"No," his hands were suddenly supplicating. "No, great lady. I cannot take the risk. The rack is hungry for the one who . . ."

He shuddered at the thought.

Her thin, bloodless lips opened in a humorless smile.

"What is the difference, Duke, merchant, reveler? They all taste the steel in the same manner."

He shook his head stubbornly, even as he retreated toward the door. But he stopped at her next words.

"Ah yes, I had forgotten. *The rack*. And its hunger." Her voice was suddenly gay. "You do well to fear it. They are still searching for the murderer of the Chevalier Montez."

He stopped, mouth agape, the nostrils of his bulbous, veined nose quivering in fear. She was a sorceress! A witch! How else was she to know of that crime, already forgotten by him. He licked the cracked skin of his thick lips.

"The Chev—ha-ha. Yes, I see. Of course I shall do the great lady's bidding."

She handed him the dagger without another word. His fingers quivered slightly at the feel of the cold steel. Then it was hidden in the folds of his cape.

"You will return the dagger to me when its work is done."

He nodded and was gone.

MARGHERITA stirred, then sat up quickly. The room was so silent, yet filled with a threat which was palpable as the silken coverlet which covered her. Her eyes strained at the corners, dark with shadow, but only shadows greeted her searching look. Throwing back the coverlet, she slipped out of bed and opened the window. The room was instantly filled with the clean, fresh air of the night. A new moon sent its pale light into the room, dispelling the shadows.

She returned to the bed, but not to sleep. Her mind was in a turmoil, yet she could not understand the reason for it. Benetto was dead. She remembered as if it was an hour ago, the Barrel's return.

He had slipped through the opened door like a shadow. Great drops of sweat stood out on his forehead and his face had been covered with yellowish blotches, giving it an appearance like that of the plague. His eyes rolled, like those of a maddened horse.

She remembered her words:

"What is wrong? You did not bungle the job!"

"No-no. The Duke is—dead. I—" he stammered. The words came hard. He swallowed once or twice and continued:

"But the dagger . . . it wasn't my fault. He twisted away and before I could pull it out, he had fallen to the ground. Just then there was the sound of someone coming—and I ran off."

She had given him the fifty florins, the assassin's reward.

She remembered, too, the return of the Duke. His body was borne on the strong shoulders of four of the villagers. They brought it in and laid it on the floor, stepping back and baring their heads. Berardo had done his work well. A single thrust had sufficed.

Once again she heard the keening sound of the cook, as she came in to look at her dead master. Nor could she forget the hostile looks of the servants and villagers. She had shown no sign of sorrow. Nor was it expected of her. But all that had happened a week ago.

For several days she had worried about the dagger and regretted her letting the Barrel use it. She could have let him use his own. But there had been a purpose to it. Benetto had brought it in one day and presenting it to her said:

"It has come at last, Cellini's gift. Look."

She had opened the box, expecting anything but what her eyes saw, a dagger.

"He promised it to me, months ago. And he has kept his promise, the good Benvenuto."

It had rankled, that. She had expected pearls or cameos. A dagger! And for him! Well, she had returned his gift.

And now she sat in the great bed and looked at the dark and somber room. A week had gone by without any news of the dagger. Someone had stumbled on the Duke's body and, seeing the gold hilt of the dagger, had removed it. Then, before anyone had seen him, had slipped away. So she reasoned.

SHE thought of Carlos. A wry look distorted her mouth. He was repulsive, like a fat slug. He had kissed her and the memory of his fetid breath and rotting, yellow teeth, sent a shudder through her body. Then her eyes gleamed at the thought of the power she would have. Venice! And the palace there. All hers. He had promised her that and more. For he had allied himself with the prince of that

city. She lifted her hand and the moon sent green fire sparkling from her finger where the immense emerald imprisoned the flesh. It had been Carlos' gift to her.

All was going as she had planned. Then why had she awakened as she had? Full of an unnamed terror. Stretching full length on the bed, she turned her cheek to the pillow to go back to sleep. Then the outstretched fingers of her hand touched something. Her hand recoiled from the cold thing it had contacted. Then her fingers returned to investigate. They slid along the cold length of it. A knife—or dagger was imbedded in the pillow!

Quickly, she lit one of the wax tapers which stood alongside the bed.

Her eyes went wide in terror. And her bosom, its white beauty bared above the snowy whiteness of her shirt, heaved tumultuously at the sight of the dagger with its golden hilt. Brown blotches marred the silver of its steel. She gasped in fright. Then she leaped from the bed and looked about the room mellow now with candlelight. There was no one there. She returned to the bed. Then she saw the knife held something to the pillow. A note!

Her skin crawled when it came into contact with the hilt of the dagger. Repressing her revulsion, she pulled the dagger away from the note. Bringing it close to the candle-flame, she read:

I cannot take this with me. Hold it until I can return for it.

There was no more.

She crumpled it into a ball and turned to throw it out the window. Something stayed her arm. Returning to the bed, she picked up the knife again.

Resolutely, she turned her mind to the logical solution of the mystery. Hers was a nature and mentality which did not believe in the supernatural.

Someone had put that knife and the note in her pillow while she was asleep. There was no other explanation. But who?

THE hour was late, but she knew Vanetta, her maid, slept lightly, ever on the alert for her mistress' call. The girl, rubbing the sleep from her eyes, came into the room. But when she saw the ill-repressed fury in her mistress' eyes, she was instantly awake.

"Come here, you little slave," Margherita grated.

The girl sidled over, on the alert for the slap she was certain to get. Instead, Margherita said:

"Who was here tonight? Who dared to come into my room without my permission?"

"Who—who was here?" The girl repeated the question, like an idiotic echo.

Margherita slapped her then.

"Answer me, you idiot."

"Why, no one, mistress," the girl answered, bursting into tears.

"You lie! I say . . ." then Margherita's eyes went wide. Of course! She saw it all now. Berardo Scarpa! He had connived with the girl. And what was their purpose? Blackmail, of course.

Before the girl could retreat, the Duchess had grasped a handful of her hair and screamed:

"The truth, slave! Scarpa was here, was he not?"

The young girl burst into tears. And through the tears, she wailed her denial:

"No. No mistress! I swear it by the Virgin! None passed my door."

Margherita released her. There was no denying the sincerity of the girl's tone. Still . . . someone could have . . . she looked at the girl again and saw her eyes were riveted on the dag-

ger. She bit her lips in vexation. She should have put it into the cabinet, before calling the girl in. Once again, this time in a calmer voice, she asked:

"Are you sure that Scarpa has not been around? I mean earlier this evening." The thought had occurred to her that he might have secreted himself somewhere in the house and in the dead of night stolen past the girl and into her room.

"Does not my mistress know," the girl replied, "that Scarpa is dead, these past few days?"

Vanetta's announcement struck the woman with the force of a blow. Scarpa dead?

"How?" she made her voice sound incurious.

"It is a mystery," the girl replied in eager tones, seeing that her mistress' anger was dissipated. "Some men found him, his throat cut, on the exact spot where his lordship . . ." Vanetta's hand flew to her mouth, to stem the flow of words.

But it was too late.

A GREAT calm descended on the Duchess. So Scarpa was dead. Good! There was no one, then, who knew how the Duke had died. Wait! The knife! The girl had seen it.

"Vanetta, my child," Margherita said, gently. "Go get your cloak. I cannot sleep. And I want to stroll for a few moments, on the cliffside."

The girl returned in a short while, bundled in the folds of a cloak. Margherita was also dressed for the outdoors. Silently they started for the door, when Margherita whispered:

"No, not that way. I do not want the servants to see us. We will use the side entrance."

The cliffs shone pallid in the light of the new moon. And the waves below were a tumultuous, heaving maelstrom.

They stood on the edge of the cliff. Below, several hundred feet, Margherita saw, like the gaping jaw of some prehistoric monster, the huge, whitened teeth of the rocks. She turned to the girl who had withdrawn from the edge and said:

"Look, Vanetta. How beautiful it is. Here, child, come closer."

Vanetta approached slowly, sliding one foot after the other in hesitancy. Then she was beside the Duchess.

"Look," Margherita said suddenly, pointing to an object sailing on silver wings in the moonlight. "An albatross! An omen of good luck!"

Vanetta smiled shyly. Her mistress was pleased. That was good. There had been so much sorrow in the house. She laughed gayly.

"Aye. So the villagers say. It is an omen of good luck."

"Yes," Margherita answered, drawing the girl close to her. "But not for you!"

She shoved the girl outward. Vanetta teetered on the edge of the cliff for a second, desperately trying to recover her balance. Then, with a scream of terror which was drowned out by the wilder, louder scream of the wind, she disappeared.

Margherita, her golden hair blowing in wild confusion about her head, watched Vanetta tumble down the sheer cliff. The girl's body struck a projecting ledge and caromed off to fall onto the waiting rocks below.

A pleased smile played about the thin, pale lips. Then she turned and made her way back to the house.

The flame of the wax candle, burned for half its length, flickered in the wind blowing with mad fury through the room. Margherita closed the window and picked up the knife from the bed. She hummed a song as she went to the rosewood cabinet and opened it.

She started to put it away and was startled to see that the stains had disappeared. Then, she felt a hand on her shoulder.

THE golden-haired little girl toddled across the room. One tiny, blue-veined hand clutched a small rag doll. The Princess Margherita was going to surprise her mother. The great, iron knob heavily scrolled, was almost too much for her. But at last it gave way to her twisting fingers. The door opened and she toddled in hesitantly. The room was empty. But beyond the curtains, she heard the sound of voices. One she recognized as her mother's. But the other . . . a puzzled frown creased the smooth skin of her forehead. It was so familiar. Yet, like a voice heard in a dream. She could not make out what the other voice was saying. Then her mother's voice came clearly:

"No! Stay away! No, it was not I! Stay away, I say!"

Then the muted, unintelligible voice of the man.

There was a scuffling sound, the scrape of furniture against the marble floor and a hoarse cry from her mother:

"No, please. Be—ahh! AH . . ." it was a scream, stilled almost as quickly as it had risen.

The little girl moved to the threshold of the room beyond the curtain and stopped there. The room was empty but for something . . .

The Duchess Margherita lay upon the floor in a pool of her own blood. Her throat had been slashed wide open.

The little girl stood there, wide eyed, staring at her mother, yet oddly showing no emotion beyond a curiosity at the sight. Then her hands twisted slowly at the rag doll's head until it tore free from the stitching which held it to the neck.

MARGARET WESTWOOD turned a petulant face to Jim Warren. He smiled somewhat grimly. And thought that he was a fool. There was no doubt that she was beautiful. The most beautiful woman, in fact, that he knew. And he was in a position to know many. A portrait done by Warren was a mark of distinction. And also an expensive item. James Warren was considered the greatest portrait painter of the generation.

He studied the face of the girl for the thousandth time. And, as always, was amazed at the variety of expressions it was capable of showing. This petulance, now. It only added to her beauty. It clouded the clear gray of her eyes and gave them an icy, intriguing look. She was so pale. So tall. And so remote!

He blew a cloud of smoke into the air. He watched it eddy toward the ceiling, then said:

"And what's wrong with the Mortons?"

He could have answered that. As far as he was concerned, they were a bit on the boring side. He, always discussing market trends; and she, prattling emptily of clothes and . . .

Her voice broke into his thoughts:

"Oh, Jim! They're so damned stuffy! And those little soirees she gives. Overstuffed dowagers in Mainbocher creations; elderly wolves in toupees; too much caviar and too little meat. Uh—uh. I'm just not in the mood for that tonight."

He could not blame her for that. Neither was he. But Morton had just commissioned him to do a portrait of his wife. And when Morton had invited him, the week before, Warren had accepted.

"Very well, Margo," he said, giving in to her. "What would you like to do?"

She flashed a smile in his direction. It made her look so beautiful he became a little giddy from it.

Then drawing on the elbow length, black gloves, she picked up the platinum fox coat from the table and gave it to Warren, who slipped it about the bare, marble-white shoulders.

She smiled up at him.

Warren cocked a quizzical eyebrow in her direction.

"By the way," he asked. "Where's Allen?"

She shrugged her lovely shoulders.

"I don't know. Upstairs in his den, I suppose, fooling around with his *collection*. Says he's going to catalogue them. Sometimes . . ." she laughed then.

Warren winced at the sound. It was so harsh a sound. So artificial. It was one of the few things about her he did not like.

FOOTSTEPS sounded on the hardwood floor of the anteroom and Allen Westwood came into the room. He was a short, fussy-mannered, little man.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "There you are. How are you, Warren?" he switched his attention to the artist suddenly, and thrust out a plump hand.

Warren's hand went out in reflex action, before he could control it. Westwood's hand was soft, warm and wet.

The little man stood on tip toe and pecked at the woman's cheek with his pouting lips. Then he stepped back and regarded them with beaming approval.

"Going out, I see," he remarked, inanely.

Warren wondered how it was possible that Westwood was able to attain the fortune he had. He seemed such an innocuous, scatter brained sort of person.

"To the Mortons?"

"Oh, Allen!" Margo exclaimed in irritation. "You know how they bore me. And besides, I do get tired of gossip. Even when it concerns me. I don't know where we're going. But I daresay that we'll find some place that's amusing."

"No harm done in asking, you know," Westwood said in solemn reminder. "Yes," he continued. "I imagine you will find something to amuse you. You always do."

Warren gave Westwood a sharp glance. But there was nothing to be seen behind the facade of plump flesh or in the slightly empty smile which could be taken for other than what Westwood seemed to be, an amiable, fussy man, whose thoughts and life was bound up in his collections of old weapons.

Oddly enough, Warren, who should have seen, did not notice that the eyes behind their ridiculously large horn-rimmed glasses were sharp in searching scrutiny.

"By the way, my dear," Westwood said, as they turned once again in departure. "Galler called me from New York. Says he has something of interest to show me. I'm taking the midnight plane."

"Oh! Gone long, darling?" she asked.

He giggled.

"You know Galler. When he does get me there, he's got to drag me to every dealer in town. And if he has something we must go into interminable discussions on the history . . ."

"I know, dear," she said. Then, "Well, Jim, let's go. Otherwise Allen will keep us here for ages discussing his hobby."

Westwood giggled again. Then, waving his hand, he turned and went up the winding stairway which led to the upper part of the house.

"WELL, where to?" Warren asked when they had made themselves comfortable.

"I don't care," she said. She felt oddly happy. Perhaps it was the evening, bright with the new moon and heady with the wine of the early fall air. Or perhaps it was just that she was free of her husband once again.

As though he had read her thoughts, Warren asked:

"Y' know, Margo. I've always been a bit curious about you and Allen. Somehow . . . well, look. Why did you marry him?"

She waited for a few moments before answering. He had put the car into gear and they had driven around the circular drive which led to the house. Then they were over the knoll and she saw the lights of Wideacres, the large manufacturing town, several miles away. Warren headed the car toward town.

"Money, silly. You know, the root of all evil."

He looked his surprise.

"But—I thought that your folks were . . ."

"Uh—uh. No, Jim, they weren't. As a matter of fact, we were as poor as the proverbial church mice. Only prettier."

He drove in silence for several minutes. Then, as if it were a sore which irritated and had to be scratched, he asked:

"Where did you meet him?"

"In England," came the surprising answer. "Mother and I were visiting our cousins, a few years ago. It was our habit, at that time, to sort of make pilgrimages all over the world to our various relatives, because oddly enough, they have money. And we'd just come back from Italy, where, I'll have you know, my cousin is a Duchess. Well . . . it was a gay affair. And you know

how I am when there are lights and music . . ."

Warren knew. He had met her at just such an affair as she had pictured. He understood a little better why Westwood had been so taken with her.

" . . . He fell for me. Just like that. And just like that, he asked me to marry him."

"And, just like that, you accepted. Because you loved him?"

"No. Simply because he had money. And I knew it. Money could buy me those things which I crave. He made a bargain, or rather he bought something. Just like he buys one of those swords or daggers he has."

Silence settled between them. The car hurtled through the star-filled night. In a short time they were at the fork in the road. He started to turn the car toward Wideacres and she stopped him.

"No, wait! I just don't feel like night clubs, smoke and crowds, tonight."

He parked the car and waited in silence for her to decide.

"I know!" she said, gayly. "That Italian colony, near Fremont. Remember, you were telling me about them?"

He remembered. This part of the country was a grape producing area. And several years before, several hundred Italian people had been brought into the country to work in the vineyards.

THEY had settled in a small village,

Fremont. Warren had been in the habit of going up there once or twice a month, when the strain of painting dowagers and their daughters proved a little too much for him, and painted the gay, light-hearted people of Fremont. And because he was an artist, they were more free with him. He had told her of these people and their ways. How, in the evenings, they would gather at

the tavern they had established in town and drink, dance and be merry, the whole night through.

But—they were clannish and standoffish. Strangers were regarded with suspicion. And above all else, they hated being stared at as if they were some sort of oddity, like something in a museum.

"What's wrong, Jim?" she asked breaking into his thoughts. "You're not afraid, are you?"

"N-no," he hedged. "It's just that they're such peculiar people. I really don't know . . ."

"Oh, don't be silly! Do you think I'll gawk at them, as if they're some sort of animal or other? Besides, I'm part Italian myself. Speak the tongue like a native, I do."

He grinned at her expression. She knew how to get around him, he had to admit. And on second thought she would enjoy their dances.

Fremont was alive this night. The single theater was doing a land-office business. The two general stores were crowded with people. Warren realized that the harvest must have been brought in, to have provided the community with the money which had to last them through the lean times. And at the end of the short stretch of highway that was the main street, the tavern had its full complement of customers. They could hear the sounds of revelry as they drove up to it.

"Better leave your coat in the car," he suggested. "Your gown isn't so extreme tonight, thank heaven. And it won't be so noticeable."

A confusion of sound greeted their entry, and she was a little bewildered by it all. Then she began to pick individual things and people out of the mass. There, at the little table next to the wall, were two elderly men playing cards. They were seemingly in

a world of their own, for not even by the smallest sign did they show an awareness of the noise and people. Now and then one would shout a word or two as he laid down a card. But otherwise the game was played in silence.

And there, in a little space cleared between four tables, a middle-aged couple danced a tarantella to the strains of a violin and an accordion. While at other tables, men and women sat in silent and watchful enjoyment of the festivities.

But for the most part it was a vociferous crowd, enjoying the night with the full capacity of their lungs and bodies. Two bartenders were behind the long bar. And they were kept busy by the ebb and flow of people.

THEN a group of people at a table not far from the door noticed Warren's entry. A squat-bodied, broad-shouldered man with the thickest and blackest moustache she had ever seen rose from his seat and shouted a greeting:

"Ho! Ees Meester Warren!"

And when they approached the table, a broad smile broke below the fierce looking moustachio.

"And a *signorina!* Welcome. Here, Riccardo," he commanded one of the young men of his party, "make room for the artista and his lady."

And when Margaret thanked him in flawless Italian, he almost broke in the middle, so low was his bow. The lady spoke their tongue! A miracle. The two women in the party smiled shyly at Margaret, while the men preened themselves and caressed the long moustaches which seemed to be a necessary, almost compulsory, adornment.

"Maria!" their host shouted to the single, overworked waitress. "*Vino!* And not from the press! The best! We have *guests*, tonight."

The talk, in the liquid sounding syllables of their language, was the simple talk of peasant folk. Of their children, their homes, the crop and the cost of living when the crop was harvested. Margaret felt strangely at ease. And Jim Warren noticed it. She was as some great lady come to visit the peasant folk who lived on her estate. She seemed part of the scene, somehow.

They sat for an hour or so. Someone produced a pencil and piece of paper and Warren busied himself with sketching the crowd. Margaret seemed content just sitting and watching the people.

Then three men came over to their table and engaged Elvio, their host, in conversation. Elvio translated the talk for Warren's benefit. Then he arose, and the rest of the party, started for the door.

"Coming, Margo?" Warren asked. "They're going to play at bowls. And it's . . ."

"I know," she said. "I heard them. No, Jim, you go. I'll wait here for you."

He hesitated. And she shoved at him with her hand, in good natured gesture to follow his friends.

She sat at the table for a while, watching the crowd. Then her eyes were attracted to someone at the bar. It was a man. At first her glance passed him by. He was just another one of twenty or so who stood at the bar and drank. Then the crowd, in its flow back and forth from the bar to the tables, left an open space around him.

She saw him clearly for the first time.

HE STOOD in semi-profile to her. She saw the chiseled sweep of a cheekbone, dark as with a heavy beard, although he was smooth shaven. The corners of his mouth were down-drawn and a little cruel looking. His nose, straight and long, had wide nostrils

which flared like those of a horse. Then he tossed the wine he held in his hand down his throat and turned, full face to her.

It was as if she had been struck by lightning, such was the effect of his piercing look. She had given him no sign, yet he came over to her table as if it was the most natural thing in the world to do. She noticed that he was tall and walked with a loose, easy stride.

Then he was at her table.

"It has been a long time," he said in Italian.

"What do you mean?" she asked, puzzled by what he said.

He smiled. Nice, white teeth. It gave his austere face a more charming look.

"Since I have seen anyone so beautiful," he answered.

She felt her face burn at his words. And couldn't understand. Certainly it wasn't the first time she'd been called beautiful. Nor was it the first time that a handsome man had approached her so. Yet she knew this was different.

"Thank you," she said, softly.

He lowered his gaze to the checkered, oil cloth table cover. Then brought it abruptly back to her.

"Are you here—alone?" He hesitated over the word, 'alone.'

She smiled.

"No. I'm here with a friend. Why?"

"I'm sorry. It was a stupid question. Really, it makes no difference. Whether or not you're alone. You see . . ."

She waited for him to continue, puzzled by his manner. But he sat silent, head bowed in intent gaze on the mystery the table cloth seemed to hold for him. His fingers traced patterns on the cloth.

The fiddler and the accordionist had moved up to a group at the bar and were now playing a strangely haunting

air. It was odd, she thought, that the song should seem so familiar. Yet she knew it was the first time she'd ever heard it.

"It is an old folk song," he said. His head was still bent away from her. "I first heard it—many years ago. Always they play it at the harvest time."

A hint of something akin to fear gleamed in her eyes for a second, then was gone. He had read her mind. That, or . . . she waved the other thought aside also. That, as some had said, there were those whose thoughts were so in harmony they didn't have to speak.

"It is a symbolic song," he continued. "The harvest of the grain. The end of summer and its beauty and the beginning of the dark days. The fruit hangs heavy on the trees. The spectre of winter will soon ride the land. And the song tells us to dance while we may."

He had an odd voice, low and haunting.

Suddenly, he arose. "Come," he said, holding out his hand. "Will you dance with me?"

SHE followed him onto the floor. It was the strangest dance she'd ever known. They moved in slow and stately rhythm to the strains of the music. And, when he bowed, she in turn curtsied. It was all so natural.

The music stopped and they returned to the table. This time, he did not sit.

"I must leave you, now," he said. "There is something I must do. A place I must go to."

"Will—will I see you—again?" she faltered over the words.

"But of course," he answered.

Her breath came quickly. "When?"

"Tomorrow night. Is that soon enough?"

She reached into her purse and pulled out a pencil and small pad of paper,

Scribbling her address on the paper, she gave it to him. He thrust it into his pocket without looking at it. Then he joined a group leaving just then.

Warren and his friends returned in a little while. They were in high spirits, laughing over something which had occurred.

He was still chuckling over the incident as he sat down beside her. And so he didn't notice her far-away look. Nor see that she was only subconsciously aware of his presence.

"Oh, Lord," he exclaimed. "You should have seen me. Warren the bowler! Elvio was trying . . . what's wrong?" he asked, suddenly aware of her air of abstraction.

She shook her head and smiled her brittle, unreal smile.

"Nothing, Jim. I was just thinking of something. Did you have fun?"

But his joyous mood was gone. Somehow he felt that there was something wrong. But what? A black spell of gloom settled on him.

"D' mind, Margo, if we leave now?"

"Yes. Let's go. There's nothing here for me anymore," she said in swift acquiescence.

They rode in a mutual silence which lasted till the car turned into the Westwood driveway. He parked the car before the white columns of the mansion. She got out and said:

"Thanks, Jim. It was a lovely evening. And I had a better time than I would have had at the Morton's."

"Good. And how about tomorrow? I want to take you to see Cameron's exhibit. You always seemed to like the people we see there."

"Nice man. I'd love . . . oh dear. I almost forgot. Sorry, Jim. Not tomorrow."

"Well then, the day after?"

"Give me a ring."

He had to be satisfied with that.

HE LOOKED oddly foreign in the cape and old-fashioned evening clothes. Yet very much at ease. He kissed her hand. It gave her an odd thrill. She invited him to join her on the sofa, facing the fireplace. Above the fireplace hung a portrait of Margaret, done by Warren.

It showed her in a dress which she had worn at a costume ball and which, she had explained to Warren, belonged to an ancestor. It was of medieval cut and pattern. She had worn it because it showed off the beauty and whiteness of her bust. Her hair too, was worn in the style of those times. Altogether, it was an excellent picture. But unconsciously Warren had delineated the very things which he disliked in her, the selfish cast of her mouth and the coldness of her eyes. Yet she loved the portrait for those very things. She knew her strength lay in those very things which men disliked most in her. From youth on she had known that in all men there is the reformer and crusader. And she was something that made them all hold the same desire. To change for the better.

"Do you like it?" she asked.

"It reminds me of another picture," he answered. His gaze was pensive. "Tell me," he said. "You speak such fluent Italian. Have you lived in the country?"

Her color heightened at the compliment.

"Only for the length of a visit," she answered. "As a matter of fact, I am Italian. That is, I have Italian ancestors. That portrait there has a counterpart . . ."

"Yes, I know," he said. "I have seen it. It hangs in the Royal Gallery in Milan. And the original is that of the Duchess Margherita."

"That's right," she said in surprise. "And oddly enough, that beauty of long

ago was an ancestor of mine."

Again he surprised her with his knowledge of the Duchess Margherita:

"She was the most hated woman of her time. I hope you have not inherited those qualities which made her so."

"What difference does it make?" she asked, shrugging her shoulders. She didn't care for the turn the conversation had taken. "Hate, love . . . if in the end, one's desires are fulfilled."

"She could not have answered differently," the man said in a low voice.

She arose and walking to the fireplace pulled at the bell cord. A tinkling sound came in answer. In a few seconds, the butler appeared. The man had arisen at the sound of the bell and had walked to the far side of the room where the shadows were deep and had engrossed himself in a medieval suit of armor.

"Madam?" the butler's voice was low in deference.

"Wine?" Margaret asked.

There was no answer from the man in the corner.

The butler's poise deserted him for a moment.

"I—I beg your pardon?" he hesitated for the barest instant. His eyes went in fleeting search to the corner where she had looked.

"The sherry," she said in dismissal. "And bring two glasses."

"Y—yes, madam," the butler said.

THE man remained in obscurity until after the butler had brought the wine. Then he returned to the love seat beside the fire.

It was then she noticed that everything about him was mobile. His hands, strong-fingered and graceful, made slow movements as he talked. His torso bent, his long, full lips parted from his white teeth. But never had she seen his eyes do other than what they were

doing now. Regarding her with a look that was the most disturbing she had ever seen. They were so intent. So darkly inscrutable.

"Ah, yes," he said softly. "The husband. But will he not surprise us, perhaps?"

She laughed and drained her glass.

"Even if he did," she answered. "He would come in and seeing us together, would mumble something about, 'having nice time, dear?' and then leave us for the greater enjoyment of his collection."

"Collection?"

"Knives, daggers, swords . . . He's mad about them. Sometimes I think he loves them more than he does me. Not that I give a hang."

"Tell me," the man said in swift question that startled her with its suddenness. "Are you satisfied with your lot? Are you content with what you have?"

And suddenly that something which had gnawed at her vitals since first she had gone to Italy and seen the spectral shape of what had once been the greatness of her forebears, came to the fore.

"No!" she burst out. "Once I thought that money was going to bring me everything I wanted. Now I know otherwise. I am the descendant of a Lombard princess! I want . . ." she panted in the grip of her feelings. "I want power! The power of . . ."

"Yes?" he was oddly eager to hear her out.

"To do as I will. The power to know that what is my wish is someone's command."

"And I can give you that power," he said filling in the silence which followed her words.

"You! How?"

"Come away with me. You want to be a Princess? I can make you a Queen!"

NOW his eyes were flashing sparks which set her afire. There was something so consuming in his manner that she could not resist him. Yet some last bit of caution made her hold back. Who was he? How was he to grant this? And what did he mean by, 'making her a queen.'

His arms had gone around her. He pressed his lips to hers in a caress so violent that her senses left her in a gush of passion. She strained her heaving bosom against him, returned his kisses with a fervor which more than equalled his. Then thrusting him from her she asked:

"Tell me! Who are you? What did you mean? How are you going to do as you say?"

But before he could answer, there was an interruption. The phone in the anteroom rang. And after a second the extension in the drawing room gave tongue. She lifted the phone and he heard a stuttering sound come from it.

She held the phone close against her chest and whispered:

"It's my husband." Then she spoke into the mouthpiece: "Now Allen! Please! Try and control yourself. I can't understand a thing you're trying to say."

She listened a while, interjecting a remark now and then.

"What's that? . . . Stolen? . . . You left with Galler and when you returned it was gone . . . So what? All right, all right! . . . So it was valuable . . . You can get another . . . Oh! Made by Cellini . . . All right dear, then I'll expect you when you get here."

She sighed in exasperation, as she hung up.

"That was my husband. He went away on one of his silly goose chases last night. Seems like this dealer in New York had a Cellini original for his collection and it was stolen. So he's

going to stay over long enough to see what will come of it."

"Did he say what it was?"

"A dagger. Now isn't that silly? All that fuss over a dagger. Now if it were some fabulous jewel? That I could understand."

"Why? Do you love jewels that much?"

"My passion," she said. "I could bedeck myself in diamonds and pearls, like the Queen of Sheba and parade about all day in them."

He arose suddenly.

"You asked how I could make you a Queen? Well, you are a descendant of Lombard princesses. And . . . I am a Prince. The Prince of . . ."

"Yes?"

"Tomorrow," he said, "I will return. And bring you a gift fit for a Queen."

She saw him to the door. And when he left after another passion-filled embrace, she walked back to the drawing room and sat in the love seat.

SHE wondered what he was going to bring her. And she smiled to herself. Jewels she had all she wanted, despite what she had told him. Money . . . Allen gave her more than was good for her. Then why had she led him on? She knew. It was that she was fascinated by him. There was something so compelling in his ways. She smiled when she thought of him as he came to the door, with his old fashioned evening clothes which just missed being shabby. Why he couldn't even speak English! And how she had led him on. Descendant of Lombard princesses! She laughed aloud at the remembrance of his expression when she had told him that. *That* was the family fable; that one of their ancestors was a Lombard Princess! She remembered she had told that to Westwood, also. But she had told him to lead him on.

Then she shook her head. She *knew* why she had said what she did. It was just that she had been bored to tears. And this foreigner had intrigued her. Even now, she thought of his tempestuous embrace and was filled by the fever of it once more.

The door bell rang and she heard the butler answer. Then Jim Warren walked into the room.

"I was driving by," he said in explanation. "And I saw the lights in the room. So I thought I'd stop by."

The words slipped past her lips before she could recall them:

"Did you see . . . oh. My, er, guest just left."

He looked at her queerly.

"Guest? Just left?" he shrugged his shoulders. "That's odd. I didn't see anyone. Wasn't looking for anyone, I guess."

She motioned him over to the love-seat. He sat down beside her and took her hand. It was icy. She withdrew it from his grasp with such a casual movement he didn't even know it was deliberate. The portrait above the fireplace took her eyes and he followed her glance.

"Y'know, Jim. I love that picture."

He was silent to her remark.

"Tell me. Why did you ask me to pose in that gown?"

HE SIGHED in the memory of the numerous sittings which the portrait required. He had fallen deeply in love with her then. Yet, in spite of that love, he had painted in the underlying weakness of her nature, as though some inexorable force dictated the fingers' motions.

" . . . Well?"

"Because you reminded me of another woman I saw. Not in real life. But in an art gallery in Milan. She was like enough to be your twin. And

when I saw you in that gown at that costume ball you gave, I knew I had to paint you in that gown, with your hair done up as she had it."

"She was a Duchess, wasn't she, Jim?"

He was startled. And perplexed. Why this sudden interest?

"Yes. And also a villainess. Seems that she murdered her husband. And that he came back from the dead to take revenge. At least that's the way the story goes. You know, one of those legends where the ghost haunts a family.

"She had a daughter who was her image. And later, when the daughter married and had children, she was supposed to have been killed by the ghost. Seems that the ghost has a habit of waiting until one of the progeny looks like her. Then he, as we say in modern times, knocks her off."

Margaret was amused by his story.

"So you fell in love with a ghost? And not with me at all. Now I know. Well, all I can say to that is I can admire your taste. But not your discretion. In telling me."

But her laugh told him that she was not angry.

They sat and finished the wine and talked for a while. Then, just as he arose to leave, he said:

"Heard from Allen since he left?"

She yawned, as if the subject of her husband was the most boring thing to discuss.

"Yes. He called just a while ago. That man!"

"Why? What was wrong?"

"Oh! It seems that he made that trip to no good purpose. This dealer friend of his, Galler, had a dagger made by Cellini. Some famous curio or other . . ."

"The Benetto dagger?" Warren asked excitedly.

"... Yes. How did you know?"

"Margo! That dagger is as well known and as rare an object as an original Da Vinci. Why . . . now isn't that strange? We were just talking of the Duchess Margherita and her ghost murderer. That is coincidence."

"What do you mean?"

"She was supposed to have been stabbed to death with that very dagger. At least they found it by her side. Later, her daughter gave it to the museum in Venice. And—when she was also found murdered, the same dagger was at her side. Nor did any one ever discover how it had been taken from the museum."

She dismissed the whole thing by saying:

"Anyhow, it was stolen from this Gallery. And Allen says that he won't be home until it's found. Thank God!"

"Good!" Warren said. "Then I'll be seeing you tomorrow?"

"I'm afraid not, Jim. I—think I'm going to be busy."

MARGARET found that she was unduly excited. The day had passed in sluggish slowness. She had been irritable. But now that evening was showing its first stars, she felt her mood change. She knew it was because of the one who was to come. To make certain that they would be alone, she had dismissed all her servants early. Now she awaited his coming with bated breath.

The bell rang. And although she was expecting its ring, she jumped at the sound. Then she had swung the door wide and he was confronting her.

Once again she brought him into the drawing room. And sat him down beside her. He was laboring under an air of barely suppressed excitement. She noticed that he wore the same clothes as he had the night before.

The only clothes he possesses, she thought, besides the dark suit I saw him in the first night. She noticed, also, that he had his hand concealed beneath his cape. The gift! She smiled to herself. Some trinket or other.

"My dear," he said. And his voice was blurred with a tremor. "You look—you are beautiful! More so than at any time that I have known."

"But you have not known me very long," she said in reminder.

He nodded his head, as if the fact had escaped him.

She knew it was his intention to offer the gift, but she wanted first to hear how he was going to make her a queen.

"Tell me," she said. "You must tell me. I haven't been able to sleep all night because of what you said yesterday. I mean about making me a queen."

He did not detect the vein of laughter in her voice.

"You will come with me," he said. "I am a Prince. The prince of all I survey. And you are she whom once I planned to help rule my kingdom. I have searched a long time for you. Do not deny me again!"

It was then she realized why she had thought his eyes were the oddest she had ever seen. They were also the maddest. Her mouth smiled a ghost smile. But the blood had withdrawn from her lips, leaving them paler than they had ever been.

The thrill she had expected to know because she was tired of the usual run of men was not what this was going to be. For she had not expected a madman. And it was all too apparent that he was mad. Now she was sorry that she had gone as far as she had.

Quickly she brought the conversation around to the gift:

"What," she asked coquettishly, "have you brought for me?"

HIS eyes were flaming coals. He brought his hand out from beneath the cape. In it was an oblong box. Holding it before him in a manner that was oddly supplicating, he snapped the catch, opening it and bringing into view the contents.

She took one look at what lay on the velvet and recoiled from it. Her eyes flashed and her mouth curled in distaste.

"Is that what you brought? Why—" her anger burst its bounds. "How dare you bring such a thing to me?"

He looked down at the dagger laying on its velvet cushion and his eyes held a strange sadness. Softly, he said:

"How long before they learn to recognize its true worth? How long must I seek the one who will accept my gift?"

"Did you bring that for me or for my husband? You had better go, before someone sees you."

"It didn't make any difference last night," he said pointedly. But his voice was not angry.

"Last night," she said, "I was interested. Tonight, I'm not."

"Why? Last night, you were bored and unhappy. You wanted power. Or so you said."

"Power! Please! Don't be stupid. I only said that to see what you'd say. Look at you! What can you offer? I have all I could ever want."

"No!" he said. "You do not have everything. You have refused my gift."

"Your gift! Take it away from me. Jewels! Is that what you call a jewel?"

"It's the most precious jewel I own," he said. "But I brought it for you and I must give it to you."

He took the gold hilted dagger from its case and moved close to her. She

recoiled from his advance. Then as he came nearer, she leaped from the sofa. But not quickly enough. His fingers caught her wrist in a grip of steel. Drawing her close, he held the dagger point pressed against her breast.

"Always," he said, and his eyes gleamed in mockery. "It ends so. You are Margherita. And you cannot change through eternity. And always must I seek the Margherita who will take the gift I bring."

Terror held her in a grip so strong that she could not even cry for help. Twisting suddenly, she was free of his grasp. Leaping to her feet, she ran from the room. Through the deserted rooms and up the stairs, she ran. And hard at her heels, she heard him in pursuit.

Where, she thought, where can I go? Then it came to her. Allen's den! Because his collection was so valuable, he had made a door which, when closed, was burglar-proof. He was at her very heels when she reached it. She slammed it in his very face. Then she leaned her back against it, her breast heaving in terror.

HER eyes caught sight of the phone. The police! They would get here in a matter of a few minutes. Quickly, she stepped to it and lifted it from the cradle.

"Operator," she whispered. And felt strong fingers tear it from her grasp.

Turning, she saw the face of doom before her. How he had managed to get through the door she did not know. For it was barred and locked as when she had come in.

He held her pressed against the desk on which the phone lay. His eyes burned into hers.

"Vengeance," he said. "Is mine."

The dagger rose above his head, then was abruptly lowered as his eyes caught

sight of a picture on the desk. It was a picture of a little girl. Long, light-colored curls framed her face. She was the image of the woman who was in his grasp.

"Your daughter?" he asked. And his voice held such a sadness that she, in spite of her panic, had never known in a human before.

"Yes," she whispered. And even in that moment of her greatest peril, thought that it was strange he should ask such a question.

"Always, always the daughter. Now she too must suffer."

Then the dagger arose above her once again. And this time she knew the end had come.

THE police and Allen Westwood arrived at the same time. He met the squad car at the bend of the drive.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

The lieutenant in charge said:

"Don't know. The operator heard strange sounds come from the phone. Then she heard a woman scream and notified us."

"Margo," Westwood called, as they entered.

But only silence answered his call.

They found her in his den. Her throat had been cut. And beside the body lay a gold-hilted dagger.

Westwood took one look at it and exclaimed:

"Benetto's dagger!"

Then he explained to the lieutenant where he had been.

"And you say this very dagger was the one you saw at Galler's?"

"I am positive!"

"But it was stolen only yesterday afternoon. How—no! It can't be done. There must be a mistake. It can't be the dagger."

"I can prove it one way or the other," Westwood said.

"How?"

"The dagger in itself is just a relic. But Cellini made it on the Duke Benetto's order. And within the hilt is a jewel which the Duke gave to Cellini. Here, I'll show you."

Before the Lieutenant could stop him, Westwood picked up the dagger, inserted his finger nail in between one of the tiny carved figures on the hilt, and the hilt opened neatly into two halves. They gasped at the sight of what lay within. It was a diamond, so large it completely filled the receptacle in which it lay.

"You see, when the dagger was given to the museum in Venice, Cellini made public the real value of the dagger."

"To hell with the dagger," the Lieutenant grated. "Now you've messed up the fingerprints."

ALLEN WESTWOOD sat for a long time at the desk after the police had left and taken with them the body of his wife. His eyes were riveted on the picture of the little girl.

Softly, he whispered:

"Poor little Margo! Only I knew that after you died, her life was empty. You were her most precious jewel. And when she lost you, she lost all that life could give her. Perhaps . . . next time—"



SCIENTIFIC ODDITY



THE heart is the most amazing of all nature's creations. During hard work or play, the heart will pump the extra blood needed although the amount may be seven times that used during normal activities. Ordinarily the heart of the average man (five feet seven inches

in height and 150 pounds in weight) pumps four quarts per minute when the body is at rest.

However, during violent exercise this same heart pumps thirty quarts of blood per minute. And when needed it can increase its output by one thousand per cent.

Some Are Not Men



**They may have bodies,
but some of the creatures
who wear human flesh are not
really men—they are things
spawned in the depths of hell**



IT ALL happened on a bright, lazy day in July when I, like yourself, was cudgeling my brain for an excuse to avoid mowing the lawn. It was hot! Very hot! Even the breeze from Puget Sound gave little comfort. The very thought of toiling away under that blazing sun was repellent. Maybe I'm just lazy but it is said that "only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the mid-day sun." Since I am neither, I decided

against it. I moved from my comfortable hammock to a wicker chair which I hoped would conceal me from my loving, over-ambitious wife. I began to doze, but even if I had been in a deep sleep my wife's soft but accusing voice would have aroused me.

"Walter! Walter Hall!" she continued. "You are the world's most exasperating man!"

"Why Mary, darling," I said in wide-

By DOROTHY and JOHN de COURCY



"There are many things I can tell you, my children," he said. "Many wonderful things..."

eyed innocence, "have I done something wrong?"

"That's just it," she answered, bitingly. "You haven't done anything! Just look at that lawn! I could lose myself in it, it's so high."

"But sweetheart, it's so hot!" I complained.

"Hot! Hot? Why this very minute I have a letter from you in my desk that you sent me last year from China. In it you bragged about how hard you worked digging up some nasty old bones with the temperature one hundred and twenty degrees. Everyone else, you said, had to stay in the tents until late afternoon, but not you! Not big, strong you! No. You said you felt invigorated. Now you get right out in that yard and invigorate yourself with that lawn mower!"

I gave my wife a very hurt look.

"Yes, dear," I replied meekly. "I'll do it right away."

Her remark 'big strong me' was not quite accurate. I'm only average height with good muscular development, but certainly not the type you see in magazines. My skin is bronzed from tropical climes which probably enhance my appearance of strength, although it provides a startling contrast to my blue eyes. As for my wife, Mary, her volatile disposition is well suited to her red hair. Unfortunately, she doesn't tan like myself, but instead burgeons forth with millions of freckles, which I consider quite fascinating. She is just tall enough for her cheek to rest in the hollow of my shoulder. Usually she is very sweet and sympathetic except when we come to the issue of mowing the lawn.

I resignedly set out with the lawn mower around the hedges which hid our little beach and most of the lawn from view of our porch. Pushing the lawn mower with Oriental fatalism, I

rounded the corner of the shrubbery and stopped dead. There, stretched full length on my lawn in the shade of a tree, was a man, apparently sleeping. This in itself was not strange for I have many friends of unconventional habits, but even from where I stood I could see that he was no one I knew. Furthermore, not even my most eccentric acquaintance would be found in such a costume. He was attired in a Turkish or Arabian style of dress with a touch of India and a bit that was not indigenous to any one country. His head was covered by a turban that appeared to be silk, surmounted by a small, plumed jewel in the front. Beneath this he wore a loose-fitting white shirt or blouse under a black vest embroidered with gold. His pantaloons conformed with the general impression of Turkish habiliment, being embroidered like the jumper and of the same black material. His feet were encased in golden slippers whose long toes curled upward in almost a complete circle.

I ADMIT that all these details were not apparent at my distance. In fact, I was too surprised to note any details at all. I pushed the lawn mower before me, vaguely conscious of a feeling of ludicrousness and annoyed because of the feeling. I was hardly the one who was out of place. I finally abandoned the lawn mower and strode toward my unexpected guest until I stood over him. Since I am not of a belligerent disposition and because of my natural curiosity, I had decided upon a friendly approach. I sized up the supine figure carefully. He appeared to be of indeterminate age, possibly fifty, and of distinctly eastern parentage.

As I stood over him, his eyes opened.

"The blessings of The Infinite be upon you, my son," he said.

My reply was not too brilliant.

"Ah, thank you—very much, I ah, that is—"

He appreciated my lack of coherence and began to explain.

"Since, my son, this is obviously your home, I feel debted to you for an explanation of my presence."

His voice was cultured and well modulated, which fact probably enhanced his sincerity in my eyes. My first assumption that he might be a lunatic didn't seem plausible in view of his manner now.

"I am sure if I were to acquaint you with my knowledge of yourself," he continued, "you might be persuaded that my presence has a definite purpose."

"Your knowlede of me?"

"Yes. You are a pursuer of the knowledge of ancient races, are you not?" my strange companion inquired.

"I am an archaeologist," I admitted.

"Far better than you may think, my son, for I find your fund of information is more extensive than that of your libraries."

"Oh, hardly that," I said, possibly hoping for more compliments on my eminence.

"Not as an archaeologist perhaps, but in your researches you have come across much that might be called the esoteric and much that is provocative to similar lines of thought," said my informer.

"I am not," I replied firmly, "an occultist nor am I a mystic." Inwardly I was dreading the next query for it was true that my secret vice was a diligent inquiry into the esoteric which I have come to believe was the science of lost civilizations, garbled by time.

"Yes, my son, I know you are neither of these. You are pursuing knowledge because you feel you must know, not for what the world will give you for finding it," my guest continued. "I

have come to you for many reasons other than our mutual interest in the study of man. I have sought you to help me in our coming struggle against a common enemy of mankind. I have also come to protect you from some dangers that you may not yet be aware of."

MY CURIOSITY was by this time whetted to a keen edge and I sought to plumb my new found friend for more information, yet I was somewhat fearful of offending him by questioning him too enthusiastically.

"Won't you come up to my house," I offered, "and have, er," I groped for the proper thing to offer. A drink? No. A cigar? Then I brightened. From somewhere in my mind a cord was struck. I vaguely remembered a connection between Asia Minor and coffee. "A cup of coffee?"

My guest smiled benignly, "I believe I should appreciate that very much."

Together we walked toward the house while my comrade commented on the appearance of my garden and I broke in during pauses with usual social inanities, "thank you very much" and "so good of you to say so" etc. etc.

As we reached the side of the house, my friend without a change in the tranquillity of his manner, laid a gentle, restraining hand on my arm. I turned quizzically and opened my mouth, but before the words could come out, the earth at my feet shook with a heavy thud. I turned away quickly and beheld a large stone from my chimney lying on the ground inches from my feet. Had my friend not stopped me when he did, I should probably have had a rather large dent in my skull to my dying day, which would undoubtedly have been immediately. I was speechless, but my friend behaved as though this were a regular part of the routine of his

daily life.

"This will serve," he said tranquilly, "to illustrate what I meant by unperceived dangers."

As soon as I recovered from the temporary paralysis of shock, I lifted my gaze to the top of the chimney and saw nothing unusual. I cleared my throat rather noisily.

"I certainly am indebted to you for saving my life," I managed to say.

My friend smiled noncommittally and changed the subject while deftly guiding me to the entrance of my house. A few moments ago or whether it was. Whether this talk of pleasantries was to divert my mind from the danger of designed to stem the flood of questions that were running through my mind, I did not know. At that moment I was too shaky to care. As we reached my study I regained a measure of my former composure and set about making my guest at home. At that moment my wife appeared in the doorway with a dish towel in one hand and a platter in the other.

"Are you through already, dear? That's fine," she went on, "I was just talking to Bob's wife on the phone and she invited us to—" she broke off in the middle of her train of conversation and let the platter drop to the floor with a splintering crash. Observing her slightly open mouth and staring eyes as she looked at my unusual guest, I was smugly aware that I was not the only one at a loss for sang-froid. She recovered herself quickly.

"Oh, I didn't know you had a guest," she said, "excuse me, dear," and a little reluctantly began to leave.

"Please don't go darling," I began, "this is Mr., ah—"

PRONUNCIATION of my name is almost impossible," my friend supplied, "but any will serve. Let us say,

for instance, Joe. I believe that is a fairly common name which would not arouse any unusual interest if perhaps you should be overheard by others."

"Oh yes, Joe," I continued. "He saved my life a few minutes ago by preventing me from being struck by a piece of masonry from our chimney."

"I'm happy to meet you Joe," smiled my wife, "and I am certainly grateful to you for saving my husband's life. I'm becoming attached to the big lug."

"I gather you know all that there is to know about us," I broke in, "but at any rate this is Mary, my wife."

"I am delighted to meet you," he said with Old World courtesy. "I hope that my presence will not be an inconvenience to you."

"Oh certainly not," she replied. "Walter's been pining away for someone to talk to besides me. But take my advice and don't let him bring out his relics or he'll keep you here long past dinner. You will have dinner with us, won't you?"

"I thank you," he assented, graciously. "It would indeed be a pleasure."

"I promised Joe a cup of your excellent coffee also, darling," I added.

"One word for Joe and two for yourself, I'll bet," Mary retorted. "I'll go and make some now, if you'll excuse me."

Mary paused by the door to pick up the broken platter. We exchanged generalities until my wife returned with a tray laden with pastries, coffee, cups (our best I noted) and other similar accessories to conversation.

Settling ourselves comfortably, my wife began preparations to serve her offerings. I munched one of those delectable Swedish scones that are so characteristic of my betrothed's culinary sorcery.

"My children," Joe began, "a motive must be of great importance to

bring one as far as I have come and through the hardships such a journey entails. Yet, my motivation is important enough to take me a thousand times farther for I have come to save the world, with your help, from a disaster that hangs over it.

"Several years ago sure knowledge of what was to come forced me to leave my temple high in the land that you call 'The Roof of the World', Tibet. Due to the geological condition of this land, much of the journey downward to Peshawar was made on foot through nearly impassable territory. Most persons would experience difficulty and actual personal danger from some of the less civilized tribes in that part of the world, but I as a priest of a religion that they had good reason to fear, was granted safe passage. From Peshawar I came by commercial means of transportation to your country. I posed as a student from China to avoid notoriety which would have spelled disaster to my purpose. Upon arrival here at your home, I changed to my traditional garb and awaited your coming to the garden.

"It is necessary that I acquaint you with the dangers that you now face because of my presence here. I shall naturally do all within my power to keep you from harm. Too, you may expect assistance from unexpected sources. Today's demonstration should convince you that these dangers are quite real, yet they may be easily avoided when you know they exist.

"**T**O BEGIN, what do you know about 'The Plumed Serpent,' Walter?"

"Only what anyone knows who has studied the Mayas," I replied. "He was a Diety to them, as I recall. Also, he was called Quetzalcoatl. I also remember that although he had been

worshipped as a god, his existence as a man who taught the Mayas many of their marvelous arts and sciences, has been established to my satisfaction, anyway."

"Excellent!" Joe rejoined, "but from where did this amazing person come and from where came his vast knowledge?"

I confessed my ignorance and Joe began his narrative.

"Before I can outline my purpose, I must give you some facts of the history of the world so that you may better understand. Approximately twenty-five thousand years ago the greatest empire that the world has ever seen came to an end with the sinking of Lemuria. This continent was about six thousand miles from the eastern to the western shores and nearly three thousand miles from the northern to southern shores. Its sinking was accompanied by violent earthquakes which rent the continent asunder. The suddenness and violence of its sinking prevented the escape of more than a trifle of its inhabitants. More than seventy million people perished. This was a great disaster for the world, for more than Rome ever was, Mu or Lemuria was the center of all culture. Yet its sinking was not the random choice of the earth, but the planned destruction of the civilization.

"Their accomplishments in mathematics, the sciences and arts were many generations in advance of ours today. Their empire was spread peacefully over the earth by their priests who were healers of the body, mind and the soul. Few of these priests, if any, were accomplished in sciences other than those in their own chosen field. As a result, the destruction of Lemuria meant the almost total loss of their knowledge of applied sciences. The knowledge that the priests had, brought the early prac-

tioners of medical science in old Cathay to a point of progress, millenia in advance of the other sciences.

"Yet one man, at least, escaped destruction in Lemuria with much knowledge, both his own and the writings of others. After a perilous voyage on what is now the Pacific Ocean, he arrived in Mexico. For many years he was the teacher, counselor and veritable ruler of the country and in the eyes of the natives, he assumed the stature of a Divinity.

"At a very advanced age Quetzalcoatl died and left as his heritage the core of a great civilization. He titled it after the name applied to Lemurian colonists, Mayas. During his lifetime, he restored as much of the knowledge of the old civilization as was possible and caused great libraries to be built to house this vast knowledge. Because these people called Mayas were not gifted with mechanical ability, most of this knowledge remained unused for thousands of years, but was kept intact and was duplicated in many books which were preserved as objects of reverence.

"**A**FTER the Mayan civilization expired, much of its culture and religion was absorbed by succeeding civilizations, so that at the time of the Spanish exploitation of Mexico, practically all of this knowledge was preserved in the libraries and temples of the Aztecs. The Spaniards in their misguided zeal to propagate their own form of religion, burned one of the larger libraries.

"In spite of the fact that the Aztecs could read few of these books and understand less, they believed them to be holy. In the dead of night the Aztec priests and some of their followers spirited away every remaining book and manuscript from every library to

a temple hidden deep in the jungles in what is now the northern part of the state of Chiapas. They were so thorough that only three manuscripts remain, the three Mayan Codices. This temple, located on a high plateau and long unused, was built of many pyramids and oddly enough, was once the residing place of Quetzalcoatl. In a great cave in the mountain that stands northeast of the temple, these holy works were reverently placed. The mouth of this cave was then sealed with huge blocks of stone and by means of their residual knowledge, caused the area for miles around to be exceedingly dangerous to those who understood not these ancient sciences.

"That these forces act even today is evidenced by the disappearance of the well-armed and prepared army of Diaz, numbering five hundred, of whom none survived. To this day, no native of the surrounding territory may be persuaded to enter within the forbidden area. Only one man to my knowledge, Dana Lamb, has ever entered and returned, yet even he felt the might of these ancient sciences. Although he suffered no serious injury, he was forced to leave the plateau. In his memoirs, you may recall, he confirms the existence of the plateau, the temple pyramids and **THE SEALED CAVE!**"

Joe paused in retrospection, then continued quietly.

"The knowledge of the Lemurian priests was passed onward for many generations from priests to neophytes so that today in all parts of the world there are men of every nationality and every race who know the parentage of mankind. They also know, like myself, that the 'evil ones' who almost destroyed civilization once, will again seek to destroy it. As the time draws nigh when this next attempt will be made, we wish, if possible to frustrate it. It

is more than possible that mankind and civilization might perish unless sustained by the knowledge of the sciences of ancient Lemuria. Although in the battle between those who are evil and ourselves, few may survive, yet through them will mankind proceed to its great destiny. It is to you that I have come to assist me in recovering these writings from that cave and to help me disperse this knowledge to the world."

AS THE narrative ended and silence settled on the room, I heaved a sigh. Many questions raced through my mind but I hardly knew where to begin. Finally I settled on one at random.

"But why me, of all people?" I asked.

My guest smiled and said. "Because my son, you are one of the chosen few whose privilege it is to take a leading part in the destiny of mankind."

Then once again I perceived my own eminence but reflecting upon the episode of the falling stone block, I decided such prominence was not too desirable.

"By the way, who did try to brain me this afternoon?" I inquired.

"The very same ones who will try to destroy all men," answered Joe. "I shouldn't regard today's attempt as typical of their methods, since that was obviously intended as a warning. Had you been killed, of course, they would have not regretted your passing and the agent responsible probably vaguely hoped it would achieve your demise."

"You mean," I queried, incredulously, "that there was an actual entity on our roof?"

"I mean precisely that," he retorted.

"Look!" I rejoined, "if you hadn't been there today, my insurance policy would now be a claim. I'm no more afraid of death than any man, but I

don't relish the prospect of being eternally threatened with extinction from a source that I can't feel or see. Then too, you would have to be with me and my wife twenty-four hours a day or we would both have starring roles at a coroner's inquest."

Joe laughed tolerantly. "But, my children," he said with a chuckle in his voice, "you can see and feel them in most cases. The 'unclean one' that we came in contact with today was undoubtedly in the form of a man. Most of them are mortals who appear to be men and who are just as vulnerable, hence they may be dealt with as men."

Up to this point it had not occurred to me to doubt the authenticity of anything that Joe had said. My half formulated doubts were put into words by my usually voluble wife who had said less in the preceding hour than in any other hour of her span of twenty-six years.

"This is so utterly fantastic!" she broke in. "Here I am a perfectly sane, normal woman who up until now has lead a perfectly sane, normal life, actually contemplating evil spirits, undiscovered sciences, impenetrable jungles with a curse on them and boggy men on my roof! I simply refuse to believe it. Common sense tells me it can't be!"

I waited in horrified silence, but Joe seemed to take no offense and found some amusement in her outburst.

"Anyway," she said, quietly, "I'm hungry and you both must be also. I'll get a bite for us to eat and we'll all feel better."

AS TO whether my new found friend would feel better after dinner, I did not know, but I surely would. Somehow I couldn't picture him being hungry or having a cold or being afflicted with any of the multitudinous annoyances that others are subject to. Up

until the time my wife mentioned it, I hadn't noticed the gnawing sensation of hunger, but now it made definite inroads on my consciousness.

There was a heavy silence in the room after Mary left which Joe did not seem to feel obliged to lift. I am considered adept at brilliant repartee, yet in this situation my usual vacuous generalities that I used to fill in lulls seemed as out of place as a 'leg show' in Boston. Joe took pity on me at last and broke the silence.

"I should be disappointed in you if you accepted everything I have said without question. It is indicative of a well-developed intellect to accept a new truth only after it has been proved. Of course," he continued, "if doubt is carried to an extreme, it prevents absorption of new knowledge. I will attempt to prove to your satisfaction the truth of what I have said later. I might add, by the way, that your wife is very charming and also quite intelligent."

I was relieved that Mary's statements of a few moments ago had not left an unfavorable impression, for she is usually much more gullible than myself. I have definite proof of this in a mountain of devices whose sole purpose is to open cans, assuming that one has sufficient engineering ability to fathom their abstract principles of operation.

"I'm glad that you approve of my choice of a wife," I replied, "because I'm still convinced she's the best there is. She's a good cook, too."

We passed the time until dinner with discussion of the details of Mayan civilization which answered many of the questions that had puzzled me since I began studying ancient races.

CHAPTER II

AFTER the evening meal, we returned to my study, where Mary

and my Oriental friend seated themselves comfortably and I paced the floor slowly in front of the fireplace. I was still weighing very carefully in my mind all that I had heard that afternoon. I absently picked up a small piece of Mayan pottery from my specimen case and stared at its cryptic motif as though it could answer the many questions that buzzed in my head like bees seeking a way of escape. I was trying to put my thoughts into a well ordered pattern, but somehow I couldn't seem to bring order out of chaos. Mary at last, voiced the first question rather diffidently.

"Are you offended at my outburst this afternoon?"

Joe favored us with one of his inscrutable smiles.

"Certainly not!" he replied. "I candidly expected one or both of you to rebel much earlier in my narrative. After all, the rebellion was only your pre-conceived ideas meeting a more or less alien atmosphere and struggling to survive."

"I believe earlier in the evening you implied that you would produce some proof of the story that you related to us," I interposed.

"Yes, I did," Joe replied. "I can only hope that the meager evidence I have will be sufficient."

He reached under his jacket and produced a small blue silken pouch which he opened gently and let the contents fall into his hand. He then held forth his hand and I saw in it two exquisitely fashioned rings. They appeared to be made of silver or platinum having a rather large oval setting of the same material. In the center of this was an eight-pointed star surrounded by a ring of some red metal that was unfamiliar to me. The center of this star contained a small golden disk which was divided into four quarters by a cross that at first glance appeared to be made

of diamonds. On closer examination, however, these jewels had a definite metallic luster.

"These rings are nearly twenty thousand years old," Joe explained. "They were the ultimate product of Lemurian science and were designed to protect the wearers against these 'evil ones' of whom I spoke. At one time they were the property of the emperor of the Lemurian Empire and his wife. The design that you see on the face of these rings was the emblem of that civilization. It was from this emblem that historians later derived the name 'The Empire of the Sun.'"

TO MY wife, no doubt, these represented rather beautiful and expensive baubles, but to me they were the most priceless treasures I had ever seen. If these proved to be authentic on close examination, they would go a long way toward convincing me of Joe's veracity. I opened my mouth to comment and it stayed open soundlessly for Joe had touched some concealed spring and the faces of both rings snapped open. Inside I could see a maze of tiny wires like metallic spider threads, neatly arranged around two tiny crystalline tubes that bore some similarity to present day vacuum tubes. They were about a quarter of an inch in length and slightly larger in diameter than a kitchen match, lying one on each side of the tiny case. At one end was a tiny coil of gleaming wire reminiscent of a Lilliputian transmitting coil. The object which caught my eye, however, was a pearly luminous ovoid which occupied the remainder of the space. As I watched, the color of the ovoid shifted through the entire spectrum and the intensity of the light that it emitted, rose and fell periodically. How long Mary and I stared at these fascinated, I do not know but I was jarred out of my speculation when

Mary breathed.

"They're beautiful!" turning to me, "aren't they, Walter?"

"Uh—yes," I replied inadequately, for indeed they were. If anything, the craftsmanship within the ring was superior to that on its surface. Joe anticipated my question.

"These rings protect the wearers by attuning themselves to the wave length of his mental vibrations and in generating heat in the small coil that you saw, when the vibrations of one emitting thoughts of destructive energy comes within its field. This field is a sphere approximately fifty feet in diameter, surrounding the wearer's body. I know nothing of the principals of operation, but this is only one of the many secrets I expect you will find in the manuscripts from Mexico."

"Now hold on a minute," I said. "I haven't yet decided whether I'm going or not. I admit these are very wonderful devices and like any archaeologist I would trade my right arm for one of them, but if I go to that temple and try to open the cave, I'm more likely to lose my life than my arm. I know that I owe you my life, but that makes me all the more anxious not to throw it away. You said today that the area was extremely dangerous for anyone not familiar with these forgotten sciences and you later emphasized that they were as unfamiliar to you as they are to myself."

I broke off and waited for Joe's answer.

Mary interjected, "Maybe these rings will protect you, Walter."

JOE smiled, but rather wearily.

"I'm afraid I must admit they would be of small help, which is the reason I have come to you." Joe went on. "Of the chosen, you are the only ones whose fundamental knowledge of

the various sciences is sufficient to enable you with reasonable care, to avoid the dangers that I mentioned."

"I won't let you do it, Walter! It's too dangerous," cried Mary.

"Oh, I don't know. I've been in jungles before," I replied. "And besides, aren't you the one that didn't believe in any of this?"

"Well, yes, that is— I just know something would happen to you and I'd never see you again!" She burst into tears and clung to my shoulders, sobbing as if her heart would break. I'm not a superman, and humanly, I love my wife very much. Sometimes maybe, I value her more than I should. I turned apologetically to Joe.

"I—I'm very sorry, Joe, but—" I broke off falteringly, not wanting to refuse yet fearful of hurting Mary.

He nodded his head sympathetically and said, "I understand, my son." Maybe it was my imagination, but at that moment he seemed many years older.

Joe smiled benignly, almost as a father at his favorite child and laid the rings on my desk.

"Wear these," he said gently. "They will help to keep you from harm. Should you ever need me, I will return. Good-bye, my children." He turned and walked slowly through the French windows into the darkened garden. Only the almost imperceptible droop of his shoulders indicated his keen disappointment.

I stood for a moment, not knowing what to do. Then, gathering the rings up from the desk, I ran out into the garden calling.

"Joe—Joe—please wait!" But the garden seemed empty and only the soft breathing of the wind in the trees answered my strangled voice.

I walked slowly back to the house, wishing I were a woman temporarily,

so that I could release my pent-up emotions in tears. I knew then, inwardly, the sufferings of Judas Iscariot, for I had unintentionally, but as surely as he, betrayed my friend. I took Mary's arm gently and we walked slowly upstairs, for once, in uncomfortable silence. I could think of nothing to say to comfort her, certainly nothing to comfort myself.

I'm sure that Mary's emotional apprehension would have disappeared after considering my many other trips into supposed dangerous places. It was definitely unfair to reject Joe's proposal on purely emotional grounds. Assuming that Joe were wrong, I certainly would have had nothing to fear from mysterious causes. If on the other hand, he was correct, the results of such an expedition would justify any risk. My mind finally became too foggy for accurate reasoning.

I pretended to sleep for Mary's sake, but I waited in an agony of anticipation for the first light of day. Sleep finally came, but not untroubled.

CHAPTER III

IT WAS late in the morning when I, finally awoke. During the night nature's inhibitory processes had been at work so that the events of the evening before seemed unreal, phantasmagoric. But then, I opened my clenched hand and in it were the rings, bringing back a flood of memories. I have never been very emotional. As a consequence, situations that are not fundamentally intellectual tend to upset me more than they should. This I reflected, probably had much to do with my overwrought condition. Regardless of my feelings now I certainly couldn't undo the past nor alter the present. I decided then to put the entire matter as far out of my mind as possible and to try to overlook

the vague sense of guilt that I had. Why I should feel guilty, I did not know, unless—no. I was too confused to think.

I forced my mind to consider the things I had to do that day. I must have stirred as I was thinking for Mary looked at me.

"Are you awake now, Walter?" she asked.

"Yes, darling," I said, in what must have been a travesty of my usual good humor.

"Sweetheart," she began, "I'm sorry for what I said last night. I didn't mean to cause any trouble. I was only afraid for you. It just came over me all of a sudden."

"I know, baby," I said in a soothing voice as I pressed her cheek to mine. "It wasn't your fault. I'm glad that you love me so much. Besides, we can't change anything. It's over and done with now."

I drew back the covers and stepped out of bed into my slippers. I took Mary's hand in mine and drew her toward the edge of the bed.

"Come on, sweetheart, let's go downstairs and I'll help you fix breakfast," I coaxed.

She smilingly assented and we walked downstairs to the accompaniment of my description of golden brown toast, steaming coffee, etc.

Throughout our morning meal, I kept up a running fire of conversation about my plans for the day and would she unpack that case sent to me by Professor So and So and would she please type some answers to this correspondence that I had accumulated. I hoped that this would be enough to keep her mind occupied for the day since I would have to go across the sound to Seattle to purchase some supplies and to return some artifacts to the University along with my observations as to their origin. I had maintained our isolation on our

little island too long already and even a good archaeologist can drop out of sight of the world all too easily unless he renews his contacts frequently. Although I wouldn't admit it even to myself, I had to get out of the house to think also.

It was nearly noon when I began my three-quarter of a mile walk to the little village on our island from where I must catch the ferry and it was close to one o'clock by the time we were underway. The throbbing of its engines seemed to make my thoughts flow more easily and the fresh salt breeze on my face as I stood on deck, buoyed my spirits up immensely.

By the time we docked in Seattle, I had rationalized enough to be convinced that we had done the right thing. The human mind, I have reflected since, is a wonderful thing since it can distort anything to suit one's desires. As I walked down the gangplank into the ferry building, I looked down at the ring that I had unconsciously slipped on my finger. What pure unadulterated folly, I thought to myself. Admittedly, the workmanship was exquisite and I speculated as to whether or not the contents of the ring were added recently.

I STEPPED absently into the men's washroom and vaguely noted that there was only one other occupant. He turned as if to leave when I passed him in the narrow corridor that entered the main body of the room. Somewhere in my mind a warning began to sound and I grasped one fact. **THE RING WAS ALMOST HOT ENOUGH TO BURN MY FLESH!** This realization was blotted out in a blaze of agony, punctuated by spinning stars and bursting fireworks inside my head as I was dealt a stunning blow from behind. My last sensations were those of being half

dragged through the doorway and hearing a man's voice say,

"Somebody help me! My brother's had a stroke. I've got to get him to a doctor right away."

Then I gave up to the greedy darkness that sought to engulf my mind.

CHAPTER IV

CENTURIES later I awoke. Things still swam before my eyes. My head was one vast, quivering, agonized nerve. Almost immediately, I was violently nauseated. My empty stomach retched horribly. For the first time in my life I was prepared to die as quickly and as quietly as possible. I closed my eyes again and gradually began to feel better although my headache left much room for improvement. I finally mustered my courage to open my eyes again and things were considerably clearer. I turned my head and looked about me. I seemed to be in a small room with only one window which was almost completely boarded up. I was lying on a cot covered only by a mattress, whose smell suggested unpleasant things. The only light was provided by a small, dirty, unshaded globe, hung by a frayed wire from the ceiling. Again, I closed my eyes and sank back on the mattress as another wave of nausea swept over me. It passed quickly though and strength seemed to flow slowly back into my limbs. I finally assayed to stand up and I made it, although shakily.

I walked to the only entrance in the room, a cheap wooden door whose paint was partly peeled, revealing the multitude of colors it had displayed during its life. I had rather anticipated that it would be locked so when it proved to be, my disappointment was not too great. I must have been overheard trying the door, for shortly a key rat-

tled into the lock and the door opened. A dark man about my own age, but slightly taller, entered the room. He didn't fit at all my mental image of a criminal, but his words dispelled that illusion.

"Did you have a nice rest?" he asked, with a none too pleasant smile, a smile that somehow didn't reach his eyes. I noted that he kept his hand in his coat pocket with obvious import. Besides, my condition was not such as to warrant immediate combat. I tried to maintain as unruffled a bearing as my kidnaper and answered in a voice that was none too even in spite of my efforts.

"You—you kidnaped me!" I said, as though feeling the necessity of putting the obvious into words. I gingerly ran my hand over the back of my head and decided that my hat should be two sizes larger for the next few days. There was no blood on my hand as I withdrew it so I assumed it to be the work of one accustomed to this sort of thing. My captor chuckled softly in his own peculiarly nasty way.

"You see, no blood," he explained. "I always take pride in a job well done. For a while, though, I thought I had overdone it, but you seem to have a very thick skull."

After thinking of how I had been taken in even after the ring's warning, I inwardly agreed that indeed I must have a very thick skull.

"You'll never get away with this," I said aloud, as no doubt thousands of others in my position have said. The man didn't seem to think this assertion merited an answer but began on a new tack.

"You realize, of course," he remarked condescendingly "that you are not being held for ransom" (I realized nothing of the sort) "but rather let us say that you are being held for ques-

tioning and will eventually be disposed of. You, of course, will die anyway; but as to how, we leave that in your hands. I think you will agree that death in the future by painless means is infinitely to be preferred to unpleasant extinction now. The first requisite to a pleasant end in the somewhat distant future is to remove the ring you're wearing and give it to me."

I CANNOT recall of ever hating someone so whole heartedly before or since.

"If you want this ring, take it off yourself," I said pettishly.

He shook his head in mock regret.

"I'm afraid that's impossible. You see, the power gems in the setting that form the cross in the center of the symbol, might make that uncomfortable for me."

The glimmering of an idea struck me.

"Fatally uncomfortable?" I asked mildly, as I thrust the ring within a few inches of his face.

He jerked back frantically, covering his face with both his hands, but recovered his balance quickly and again covered me with the revolver whose outline could be plainly seen in his pocket. His breath hissed venomously through his bared teeth.

"For that," he breathed gently, "I shall have the pleasure of removing your eyes with my fingernails."

His face was white with rage and he was trembling ever so slightly as he backed through the door, covering me diligently with his weapon. He closed the door quickly and locked it from the outside.

I felt rather pleased at the outcome of our encounter, although I was rather sure that he was in earnest regarding his grisly threat. As an after thought, I decided that given time he could de-

vised many equally gruesome and painful procedures. Immediately much of the bravado with which I was inspired, disappeared.

I set about trying to think of some means of escape, having no desire to become a guinea pig for my sadistic kidnaper. I didn't know where I was so couldn't evolve a plan of escape. I assumed that calling for help would be useless or I should have been gagged before awakening. I studied the light momentarily then decided darkness might be to my advantage since whomever I might injure was certain to be an enemy. There was no assurance that he was the only member of the gang that had kidnaped me, which subsequently proved to be good reasoning. Unscrewing the hot light globe, I held it in my handkerchief until it cooled. My plans for escape were as yet rather vague. I waited a few feet from the door in the darkness, trying not to make a sound. Presently, the door opened slowly, but I made no move.

"You will turn on the light, please, Mr. Hall," commanded a new voice, deeper than my captor's.

I made no answer but hurled the light bulb through the dim outline of the doorway. I struck something beyond where it exploded with a sharp report. Judging from the sounds, my enemies' confusion was complete and I dashed through the darkness toward the door with my fist stretched out before me, ring foremost. The ring contacted something yielding in the darkness and I heard a scream of terrible agony. Then once again, my head was struck with what felt like a locomotive. Since my cranium was already sensitized, I could do nothing but remain on my hands and knees on the floor until the pain subsided. Then the light from a flashlight fell on my face and I stared toward its unseen holder. No doubt

he also had a gun trained on me as accurately as the flashlight. I heard the voice of my first captor.

"PLEASE, honored one, let me question him while you are away. I promise you results."

The second voice answered.

"I am observing the results that you promised me before. Take him in the other room and tie him securely in a chair, you fool! If I had wanted him at large, I should not have had you capture him."

The efficiency with which I was urged into the room again and the speed with which I was tied, bespoke the terrified willingness of my kidnaper to obey his superior. Meanwhile, the one in authority had gone and returned with a light globe which he ordered installed. The room was restored to its previous inadequate illumination.

My back was to the door so that I could not see the head of the gang, but his henchman took pains that I should see his evil countenance. His expression left no doubt as to the means he planned to use to question me.

"Come here, scum," ordered the leader, "take the body of your stupid comrade and put it in the corner out of the way."

"Yes, great one," replied the submissive sadist, as he hurried to carry out the command. He came into my line of vision again with a corpse over his shoulder. The eyes were wide and staring and the mouth was contorted as though in great pain. A spot on its neck was charred and burned as if by a hot iron. I puzzled to myself. Could this ring be as deadly as it appeared? The leader of the gang seemed to divine my thoughts.

"Yes, Mr. Hall, your ring did that. So now you see why we must have it."

"Is that why I was kidnaped and

brought here?" I queried.

"No," my unseen informer replied in his toneless voice. "You were taken because you knew too much. Had you known more of the power of the ring that you wear, we could not have done this. But fortunately for us, you knew not its many uses. Of course, by now you realize that we are not men like yourself but this knowledge will be of no use to you. You see, Mr. Hall, so long as our presence is undetected, we may work freely in your world. You have come into possession, quite innocently I admit, of certain knowledge that we do not wish generally known. From the mouth of a Buddhist priest these revelations are invariably ignored, but you are a scientist noted for careful and accurate work and therefore your words might carry too much weight. Added to this, you have the ring which even I am powerless to remove and I am afraid that its evidence is irrefutable. Since you will not remove it, we are forced to take you to our domain which is deep in the earth. If we cannot obtain this ring, we can at least destroy it and of course, you with it."

"I am hopeful," he continued, "that I may persuade your wife to remove her ring, if she has not already done so, before I take her life. I'm sure you would rather I did this in preference to having it done by this bungler. I shall leave him to guard you."

My blood froze in my veins.

"No," I screamed. "No! No! She doesn't know anything! Please don't harm her. I'll do anything you ask—anything!" I broke off sobbing.

"I'm inclined to agree with you. She probably knows nothing," came the toneless reply. "But she might raise some embarrassing questions regarding your disappearance. I shall endeavor to make it appear that you

murdered your wife and then disappeared to escape punishment. I'm sure you can understand why I must do this."

"No! Don't do it," I pleaded. "Please don't! Please!"

His diminishing footsteps as he went out of the room was my answer.

CHAPTER V

IF I had thought that my physical pain was unbearable, how much more intolerable was my mental agony now. I had to save Mary. No cost to myself could be too great. I strained at the ropes and gritted my teeth as the flesh tore under them. My blood served as a lubricant so that my wrists could rotate, but no man was strong enough to break those bonds.

My guard wet his lips and his eyes gleamed in his unholy enjoyment of my self inflicted torture.

I would have given my soul for a knife or even a piece of glass. Even as the thought formed, I felt a tiny stab on the under side of my left wrist. My body went rigid. I tentatively felt about with the little finger of my left hand and yes! yes! There was a tiny, razor sharp blade protruding from the face of the ring. Then I remembered Joe's words. "These rings protect the wearers by attuning themselves to the wavelength of his mental vibrations."

Delicately, fearful that it might break, I severed a loop in the ropes about my wrist. Fortunately, I was not tied to the chair nor were my legs bound. I carefully worked my wrists free keeping my arms through the rungs on the back of the chair. The grinning fiend in front of me tipped back his head to laugh aloud, apparently at some new inspiration for my torture. I lunged across the room, berserk with rage. Before he had a chance

to defend himself, I had his throat between my hands, crushing with all my might. His eyes rolled wildly as he tried to pull my hands free. He kicked me viciously in the shins and my hold was broken, but inadvertently, my hand turned over and the face of my ring pressed into the under side of his jaw for a fraction of a second. His breath hissed inward in an expression of suffering too great for sound. He fell like a marionette whose strings had been cut and I stared stupidly at his body for a moment before sanity returned.

"Mary! Oh God! Mary!"

I ran out of the tiny room and into what appeared to be a large warehouse. It was in darkness except for the glow from the doorway behind me and a small nightlight at the far end of the building. I looked about wildly for an exit and seeing none, raced toward the spot of light. A small door was there which I tried and "thank God!" it was open.

Out in the street, I stopped and looked about me. It was dark, but I could see that I was on the waterfront. Apparently I had been held in an empty warehouse. It was little more than a block away from the ferry terminal.

"He must have taken a ferry. He must have!" I kept telling myself. He couldn't afford to attract attention from the islanders with a strange boat.

I sped toward the ferry building, my breath coming in long gasps that seemed to give me no air. Inside the building, I saw the big clock. Too late! Ten minutes too late! The ferry was gone. Even as I looked through the windows at the far end of the building I could see the lights of the ferry receding. The police? No! They wouldn't believe me. It was too utterly fantastic. Nor would anyone else believe me.

I RAN out of the ferry building and down the iron stairs to where I did not know. Then I heard the chugging of a sluggish engine beside the great ferry dock. A small boat was docking there, a fishing boat, but a boat none the less.

"Hey! Hey captain," I called to him. "I'll give you fifty dollars if you'll take me across the sound to Sunset Island."

He gave me a fishy stare, which changed into one of warm friendliness as he saw me already pulling bills out of my wallet. He welcomed me aboard his ship with the grand eloquence of a head waiter while at the same time greedily extracting the bills from my hand.

I had hardly settled my feet on the deck before the engines throbbed into full power. The lurch of starting almost threw me to my knees. We were well out past the end of the dock before the old salt turned a knowing eye toward me.

"Law after ya, son?"

"No. No, nothing like that," I stammered hastily.

"Not yit, ay," he replied and chuckling turned back to his controls.

"Can't you make this thing go any faster?" I asked, anxiously.

"Nope, don't reckon I can," he replied in his slow drawl. "Don't you worry none son, there's a fog coming up and I can dodge that there harbor patrol all night if I hafta."

"How many times do I have to tell you I'm not a fugitive from justice? All I want you to do is take me straight to Sunset Island and damn the harbor patrol!"

He turned to me again as if to say something, then shrugging his shoulders, turned away.

The fog he had prophesied tentatively lowered wisps of vapor into our path. The lights of the ferry far ahead

of us dimmed to yellow even as I watched. The full-throated voice of the engine pounded into my consciousness. My heart and thoughts began beating in the same rhythm, "got to get there," "got to get there." My nerves screamed in protest against this enforced inactivity.

"How much longer will it be before we get there?" I asked.

"Bout half an hour," he grunted without looking in my direction.

I made a rapid calculation and then groaned aloud. I would be too late! The fog! Maybe the ferry would have to slow down for the fog. Then another fear gnawed at my already distraught mind.

"Are you sure you can find your way in the fog?" I voiced anxiously.

The old pirate transfixed me with a baleful stare.

"Humph," he grunted, "why I've sailed these waters with everything that has a bottom for thirty years. I could find that island in a fog easier'n you could stick your hand in your pocket in the dark."

EVEN as he spoke the fog settled and the world was lost from sight. We were in a little world of our own with blank grayness for walls and black waters for the floor. The captain's gnarled hand turned a small brass knob. A prolonged blast from the ship's fog-horn shattered the night. I shivered involuntarily at the dismal sound. At frequent intervals it punctuated my thoughts with soul-destroying bellows. A multitude of echoing horns took up the cacophony. To my upset mind, the night was filled with the sounds of horror and death.

I smoked innumerable cigarettes and stared at the red and green reflections of the ship's lights in the fog. Somehow I couldn't overcome the feeling

that we were standing still in spite of the wind in my face and the lashing of the waters on the bow of the ship.

The idea struck. What could I do to find this man? I had only heard his voice, but had no idea what he looked like. I had to overtake him before he reached the house!

My introspection was interrupted by the appearance of the ferry's lights. Then I was horrified to see that it was already returning to Seattle. My heart sank. He was on the island. Perhaps even now in our house.

"How much further?" I managed in a choked voice.

"Bout a mile," the skipper answered, unconcernedly.

The words tumbled over one another as I tried to explain to him where my house was in relation to the ferry dock.

"Sure, sure, son. Don't get excited," he said soothingly as the boat veered slightly toward the north. "Have you got a dock down there?"

"No, I haven't. But never mind that. Just bring it as close as you can and I'll make it the rest of the way myself," I insisted.

"This rig of mine draws 'bout two feet of water," he warned. "You're going to ruin that nice suit if you jump in then."

"I know, I know," I replied impatiently, "but that doesn't matter."

He shrugged his shoulders again and turned back to the wheel. Presently he snapped on a powerful searchlight and flicked its beam across the beach just ahead.

"That's it, that's it," I said, pointing excitedly. "That's my bath house over there. Just a little to the left. Cut off your lights and throttle down the motor."

For the third time he shrugged his shoulders and obeyed. The boat glided silently, lightless, up to the beach. The

keel grated on the sand and I went over the side in a running leap. I struck the knee-deep water and splashed ashore. Running up the lawn toward the house, I was gripped with fear as I saw that the house was dark. As quietly, but as quickly as possible, I entered the house and stood listening. There was no sound but **THE RING WAS WARM**. The ring! That was it! I walked silently toward the kitchen, but the heat diminished. I retraced my steps and cat-like made my way to the living room. Now the ring was hot, but the living room was empty. I paused, then remembered. Joe said, "this field is a sphere, approximately fifty feet in diameter, surrounding the wearer's body." He must be upstairs!

I FORCED myself to walk upstairs when my heart told me to run. In the gloom at the head of the stairs, something moved. I moved cautiously toward it. It was he! I knew it was he! I tensed, then jumped toward him. My outstretched arms encircled his chest and we went down together. His hands grasped my throat with the speed and strength of a striking python as we rolled over and over on the floor. Then I heard his toneless voice in my ear, as unruffled as ever.

"Your ring will do you no good now, Mr. Hall, for all of my body is covered."

I strained to break his hands loose. My senses were already swimming. His strength was unbelievable. The house lights came on suddenly. Temporarily blinded by the light, my enemy involuntarily relaxed his hands. I broke free and rolled away, but he leaped on me and tried for his former strangling hold.

I fought him off as best I could, but I am no expert at rough and tumble fighting. My opponent knew every

trick and used them all. He drove his gloved knuckles into his temple. My aching head blazed in agony. Through the red mist before my eyes, I snatched frantically at the hood over his head. It tore free in my hand and his face contorted in terror. He beat viciously at my face with his clubbed fist. Then his body collapsed limply on top of me. I rolled his inert form off and got to my feet, my legs shaking. Mary stood over my unconscious opponent white faced and trembling. In her hands she clutched a heavy, brass vase. She stared at me uncomprehendingly. Then,

"Walter, Walter darling! Are you hurt? O dearest, are you all right?"

I couldn't say anything. I could only hold her close to me and thank God that she was safe. Finally, we turned and looked at the limp figure on the floor.

"Good Lord, Mary! It's the guest lecturer at the University, Dr. Heinrich!"

"But why should he try to kill us?" Mary exclaimed. "I've never even met him!"

"Well, it seems, Mary, that we know too much and they're willing to go to any lengths to keep us from spreading our knowledge. This afternoon I was kidnaped, but I escaped, killing two of these creatures in the process."

"Oh, Walter!" she whispered, horrified.

"If you hadn't turned the lights on just when you did, he would certainly have strangled me," I added.

"I didn't turn them on, Walter," Mary rejoined, puzzled. "They went out all over the house just before you arrived. I thought a fuse had blown and was going to put in another when he came in the front door. At first, thinking it was you, I called, but he didn't answer, just kept walking toward me. I ran upstairs and he came up after me,

just walking, not saying a word. Then I heard you two fighting on the floor and the lights came on again all by themselves."

A mild voice from the stairs answered.

"I am afraid that I must take the blame for that, my children."

"Joe!" we chorused.

"YES, it is I," he said as he came into view. "I promised you that I would return if you ever needed me, but it appears that I was almost too late."

Joe removed a small vial from under his jacket, bent over the unconscious form on the floor and poured the contents into his slightly opened mouth.

"Isn't he dead?" Mary timidly inquired.

"Not yet," Joe replied succinctly.

"What do you mean," I asked. "Was that poison?"

"In a way, yes," he smiled.

"What do you mean, 'in a way,'" I insisted. "Either it is or it isn't poison!"

Joe seemed to weigh his answer carefully before replying.

"In reality, my son, it is a harmless potion which was discovered many years ago. On the surface of the earth, it remains harmless, but taken deep in the earth and exposed to the radiations found there, it decomposes to a swift and deadly poison. Should this 'evil one' ever return to the underground, he will immediately perish."

Throughout all this conversation neither Mary nor myself had been watching the inert being on the floor. We turned our eyes toward him again. He was beginning to stir. Suddenly his eyes opened and stared at us wide with fear. Joe reassured him.

"Do not fear us, one of evil. We shall not harm you. Go your way and leave us in peace."

The being accepted his invitation

with alacrity, struggled to his feet and half ran, half fell down the stairs. The front door opened and we heard his running footsteps retreating down the road.

"Isn't that dangerous, letting him go like that?" I asked perplexed.

"I believe not," Joe replied. "Also, he will serve a useful purpose. He will have to dispose of his two departed accomplices to avoid exposing himself to the penalties of your laws. He will then return to the domain of the destructive ones to make known this new danger to their existence. It is questionable if his report will ever be given."

Mary shuddered, "How awful!"

"But necessary," Joe completed, "if you both are to live."

"But won't he tell others of his kind above the ground?" I queried.

"And admit his failure? I think not, my son."

"Is he the only one that knows of us?" I asked.

"For the present, yes," was the calm rejoinder, "but in the future, if you actively fight them you will become as well known as myself."

"As indeed I will!" I said grimly.

"Does this mean that you have reconsidered recovering the manuscripts?" Joe inquired with a twinkle in his eye.

I looked at Mary. She nodded her head with a touch of pardonable anxiety in her eyes.

"There's only one condition," she stipulated, "I insist on going too."

I looked helplessly at Joe.

"She would be safer with us than left alone, my son," he smiled. "After all, the creatures we fight are more numerous here than in a jungle."

I considered this for a moment, but the logic was inescapable. Besides, I was outnumbered. I grinned broadly, took both of them by the arm and guided them toward the stairs.

"Let's discuss our plans over a cup of Mary's coffee," I said. "By the way, Joe, you're about my size. I think you could wear one of my field outfits. It's not quite as attractive as your present costume, but we've got to think of the neighbors!"

Joe looked at his finery and sighed, regretfully.

* * *

As I COMPLETE the writing of this narrative, Mary is making her last pot of coffee at home. Through the doorway, I can see Joe painstakingly sharpening a machete. In khaki, he looks very much the part of an explorer. Our supplies and equipment are packed.

Our train leaves at ten thirty tonight.



THE WONDER DRUG



A DRUG made from an earth mold that's different from penicillin, and is working wonders where penicillin fails is under study at the University of Illinois at the present time.

Streptomycin's preliminary performances in tests with laboratory animals, are almost sensational. It is now claimed that penicillin is a wonder drug, but recent results indicate that the streptomycin may prove to be the wonder of wonders drug.

The discoverer of streptomycin is Dr. Selman A. Waksman of the New Jersey experimental station at Rutgers.

Streptomycin is one of about 50 antibiotics, all

mold, fungus or micro-organism products like penicillin, now under investigation in the world's laboratories.

Recent results with experimental animals at the Mayo Clinic at Rochester, Minn., indicate that such diseases as tularemia, typhoid fever, certain types of dysentery and even tuberculosis may yield to streptomycin. In addition, it is effective against practically all the diseases now cured by penicillin and some of the penicillin resistant types yield to this new drug.

A sharp increase in life expectancy in America should be noticeable soon due to these antibiotics and to the medical knowledge gained in the war.

—Jeffry Stevens.

BOTHON By HENRY S. WHITEHEAD

**Bothon knew only that he was wronged;
and he sought revenge. But the gods
had ideas of their own!**



She stood aghast as the monster waved rolled in

POWERS MEREDITH, at his shower-bath before dinner in the bathroom adjoining his room in his New York City club, allowed the cake of soap to drop on the tiled floor. Stooping to recover it he rapped the side of his head against the marble sidewall. The resulting bruise was painful, and almost at once puffed up into a noticeable lump. . . .

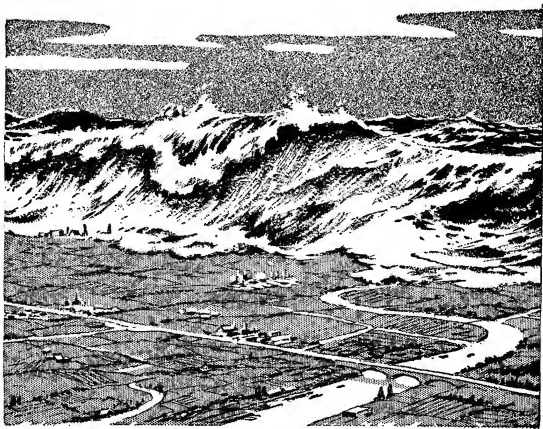
Meredith dined in the grill that evening. Having no after-dinner engagement he went into the quiet library of the club, empty at this hour, and settled himself with a new book beside a softly-shaded reading lamp.

From time to time a slight, inadvertent pressure of his head against the chair's leather-upholstered back would remind him unpleasantly of his accident

in the shower-bath. This, after it happened several times, became an annoyance, and Meredith shifted himself into a preventive attitude with his legs draped over one of the chair's rounded arms.

No one else came into the library. Faint, clicking noises came in from the nearby billiard-room where a couple of men were playing, but, absorbed in his book, he did not notice these. The only perceptible sound was that of the gentle, steady rain outside. This, in the form of a soothing, continuous murmur, came through the partly-opened, high windows. He read on.

Precisely as he turned over the ninety-sixth page of his book, he heard a dull sound, like a very large explosion coming from a vast distance.



Alert now, his finger, holding his place in the book, he listened. Then he heard a rumbling roar, as though countless tons of wrecked masonry were falling; falling; clearly, unmistakably, the remote thunder of some catastrophic ruin. He dropped his book, and, obeying an almost automatic impulse, started for the door.

HE met nobody as he rushed down the stairs. At the coatroom, which he had to pass on his way to the doorway, two fellow members were chatting easily as they took their checks. Meredith glanced at them, surprised. He rushed on, to the doorway, and out into the street, where he paused. An empty street!

The rain, reduced now to a mere drizzle, made the asphalt shimmer in the street lights. Over towards Broadway, certainly, there must be clamor! But when he reached it he found only the compound eleven o'clock bedlam of Times Square.

Along Sixth Avenue, countless taxicabs weaved in a many-hued stream, jockeying for position in the *maëlström* of the night-traffic about the Hippodrome. On the corner, a solitary rubber-coated policeman, swung long efficient arms like a pair of mechanical semaphores, and skillfully directed the crawling traffic. To his ever-increasing wonderment, everything seemed normal. But what then had been that catastrophic sound?

RETURNING to the club entrance, he hesitated, a frown creasing his brow. He mounted the three steps hesitatingly, and entered, pausing at the door-man's desk.

"Send me up an 'extra,' please, if one comes out," he told the clerk. Then he went up to his bedroom completely puzzled.

Half an hour later as he lay in bed wakeful and trying to compose in his thoughts the varying, incongruous aspect of this strange affair, he was all at once acutely conscious of a distant, thin, confused, roaring hum. The most prominent element in this sound was the deep, soft, and insistently penetrating blending of countless voices. Through it ran a kind of dominant note—a note of horror. The sound chilled his blood. It was eerie. He found himself holding his breath as he listened, straining every faculty to take in that faint, distant, terrible clamor of fear and despair.

Of just when he fell asleep he had no recollection, but when he awakened the next morning there hung over his mind a shadow of remembered horror, not wholly dissipated until he had bathed and begun to dress. He heard none of the sounds at the time of his awakening.

No "extra" lay outside his bedroom door, and a little later at breakfast he opened expectantly and scanned several newspapers vainly and with a mounting sense of wonderment for any account of a catastrophe which could have caused the sounds. Gradually the implication grew upon him. He had, actually, heard the convincing, unmistakable evidence of such a catastrophe—and *no one else knew anything about it!*

He fell asleep immediately after turning in.

The following morning was Sunday. The reading-room was full, and he carried his book up to his bed-room after late breakfast to read the rest of it in peace. Soon after he became immersed in it, his attention was distracted by the tapping of a window-shade, blown in and out by the breeze. It was annoying and he paused in his reading, intending to rise and adjust the shade.

As he withdrew his eyes, and part of his attention, from his book, all at once

he heard a new sound. It was precisely as though a distant, sound-proof door had been abruptly opened.

As he listened, fascinated, there came back to him and grew upon him a paralyzing, cold fear. There seemed to be no stopping it. The faint penumbra of a slight nausea shook him. He could distinguish overtones now, high tones, cries of battle; the impact of a charge against a resistant horde; noise of plied weapons.

THE window-shade tapped again against the window casing. He snapped back into the familiar environment of his bedroom. He felt a little sick and weak. He rose shakily, walked across the room and into the bathroom, and, noisily splashing the water about, washed his hands and face.

Then he paused, suddenly to listen again, a towel gripped between clenched hands. But he could *hear* nothing now, nothing except the tapping of that window-shade in the fresh breeze blowing through the open window. He hung the towel on its porcelain rod and walked back to his chair.

It was an hour too early for lunch, but he wanted urgently to be where there were people about, even waiters, people who were not "hearing things!"

In order to prolong his companionship with old Cavanagh, the only other early luncher, Meredith ate somewhat more than usual. The unaccustomed heavy meal at such an hour made him drowsy, and after lunch he stretched out on a davenport before one of the two open fireplaces in the now unoccupied reading-room, and fell at once into an uneasy sleep.

A little before three he awakened, stale, and as he came to conscious wakefulness he began to *hear*, at first quite distinctly, and then with increasing loudness and clarity as though a steady

hand were opening up a loudspeaker, that same sound of fire and human conflict, and the dreadful, menacing roar of a thunderous ocean's incalculable anger.

Then, Old Cavanagh, napping on the other davenport, struggled with senile deliberation to his feet with many accompanying "hums" and "ha's," and began lumbering across the room towards him.

"Lords' sake, what's the matter?" he demanded.

Kindly goodwill looked out of the old man's distorted countenance. Meredith, unable to control himself any longer, stammered out his incredible story.

"Hm! Strange . . ." was the old man's comment when Meredith ended. He produced, lighted deliberately, and puffed upon an enormous cigar. He seemed to cogitate as the two sat side by side in a pregnant silence of many minutes. At last he spoke.

"You're upset, my boy, naturally. But, you can hear everything that's going on around you, can't you? Your actual hearing's all right, then. Hm! This other 'hearing' starts up and goes on only when everything's perfectly quiet. First time, you were here reading; second time, in bed; third time, reading again; this time—if I wasn't snoring—you were in perfect quiet once more. Let's test that out, now. Keep perfectly still, and I'll do the same. Let's see if you hear anything."

They fell silent once more, and for a while Meredith could hear nothing of the strange sounds. Then, as the silence deepened, once again came that complex of sounds indicating devastating battle, murder, and sudden death.

He nodded silently at Cavanagh, and at the old man's acquiescent murmur the sounds ceased abruptly.

IT TOOK urging before Meredith could be persuaded to consult an

aurist. Medical men, Cavanagh reminded him, would keep quiet about anything strange or embarrassing. Professional ethics. . . .

They went uptown together that afternoon to Dr. Gatefield, a noted specialist. The doctor heard the story with close-lipped, professional attention. Then he tested Meredith's hearing with various delicate instruments. Finally he gave an opinion.

"We are familiar with various 'ear-noises,' Mr. Meredith. In some cases the location of one of the arteries too close to the ear-drum gives 'roaring' noises. There are others, similar. I have eliminated everything of that kind. Your physical organism is in excellent condition, and unusually acute. There is nothing wrong with your hearing. This is a case for a psychiatrist.

"I am not suggesting anything like mental derangement, you will please understand! But I recommend Dr. Cowlington. This seems to be a clear case of what is sometimes called 'clair-audience,' or something similar—his department; not mine. The aural equivalent of 'clairvoyance' is what I am indicating, you see what I mean. 'Second-sight' has to do with the eyes, of course, but it is mental, although there is often some physical background. I have no knowledge of those phenomena. I hope you will take my advice and allow Dr. Cowling—"

"All right!" interrupted Meredith. "Where does he live? I might as well go through with the thing now as later."

Dr. Gatefield showed traces of sympathy under his rather frosty professional exterior. He dropped the diagnostician, became the obliging, courteous gentleman. He telephoned to his colleague, the psychiatrist, and then surprised both Meredith and Cavanagh by accompanying them to Dr. Cowlington's. The psychiatrist proved to be a

tall, thin, and rather kindly person, with heavy, complex spectacles on a prominent nose, and then, sand-colored wisps of hair in a complication of cowlicks. He showed marked interest in the case from the start. After hearing Meredith's story and the aurist's report he subjected Meredith to an examination of more than an hour, from which, feeling more or less as though he had been dissected, he nevertheless derived a considerable sense of relief.

It was decided that Meredith should arrange at once to take several days off, come to Dr. Cowlington's house, and remain "under observation."

HE ARRIVED at the doctor's the next morning and was given a pleasant, upstairs room, with many books and a comfortable davenport on which, in a recumbent position, the psychiatrist suggested, he should spend most of his waking hours, reading.

During Monday and Tuesday, Meredith, now after Dr. Cowlington's skillful reassurances no longer upset at *hearing* the strange sounds, listened carefully for whatever might reach him from what seemed like another—and very restless—world! He *heard* as he *listened* for long periods uninterrupted by any aural distractions, the drama of a great community in the paralyzing grip of fear—fighting for its corporate life—against irresistible, impending, dreadful doom.

He began, about this time, at Dr. Cowlington's suggestion, to write down some of the syllabification of the cries and shouts as well as he could manage it, on a purely phonetic basis. The sounds corresponded to no language known to him. The words and phrases were blurred and marred by the continuous uproar of the fury of waters. This was invariably, and continued to

be, the sustained, distinctive background for every sound he heard during the periods while he remained passive and quiet. The various words and phrases were entirely unintelligible. His notes looked like nothing which either he or Cowlington could relate to any modern or ancient tongue. When read aloud they made nothing but gibberish.

These strange terms were studied over very carefully by Dr. Cowlington, by Meredith himself, and by no less than three professors, of Archeology and Comparative Philology, one of whom, the Archeologist, was a friend of Cowlington's and the other two called in by him. All of these experts on ancient and obsolete languages listened with the greatest courtesy to Meredith's attempt to explain the apparent setting of the sounds—most of them were in the nature of battle-cries and what Meredith took to be fragments of desperately uttered prayer—some of the material having come to him in the form of uncouth, raucous howls—and with the greatest interest to his attempts at reproducing them orally. They studied his written notes with the most meticulous care. The verdict was unanimous, even emphatic on the part of the younger and more dogmatic philologist. These sounds were quite utterly at variance with any known speech, including Sanskrit, Indo-Iranian, and even the conjectural Akkadian and Sumerian spoken tongues. The transcribed syllables corresponded to nothing in any known language, ancient or modern. Emphatically they were not Japanese.

The three professors took their departure, and Meredith and the psychiatrist Dr. Cowlington went over the list again.

Meredith had written: "I, I, I, I;—R'ly-eh!—Ieh nya,—Ieh nya;—zoh, zoh-an-nuh!" There was only one grouping of the words which formed

anything like a section of continuous speech, or sentence, and which Meredith had been able to capture more or less intact and write down—"Ióth, Ióth,—natcal-o, do yan kho thútthut."

There were many other cries and, as he believed, desperately uttered prayers quite as strange and off the beaten tracks of recognized human speech as those noted down.

IT WAS quite possibly because of his concentration on this affair of the remembered words—his own interest in them being naturally enhanced by Dr. Cowlington's and that of the three experts—that Meredith's dream-state impressions just at this time, and suddenly, became markedly acute. These dreams had been continuous and consecutive since their beginning several nights before, but on this night after the rather elaborate investigation of the words and syllables, Meredith began in earnest to get the affair of his environment in the strange city of the flames and conflicts and confusion and of a roaring ocean, cleared up with a startling abruptness. His dream impression that night was so utterly vivid; so acutely identical with the terms of the waking state; that he couldn't tell the difference between his dream slumber and wakeful consciousness!

Everything that he had derived mentally out of that night's sleep was clearly and definitely present in his mind. It seemed to him precisely as though he had not been asleep; that he had not emerged from an ordinary night's rest into the accustomed circumstances of an early morning's awakening. It was, rather, as though he had very abruptly passed out of one quite definite life into another; as though, as it came to him afterwards, he had walked out of a theatre into the wholly unrelated after-theatre life of

Times Square.

One of the radical phases of this situation was not only that the succession of dream experiences had been continuous, with time-allowances for the intervening periods of those days-in-between which he had spent here in Dr. Cowlington's quiet house; not only that, extraordinary as this realization seemed to him. The nearly consecutive dream experiences *had been the events of the past few days in a life of thirty-two years*, spent in that same environment and civilization of which the cataclysmic conditions which he had been envisaging appeared to presage a direful end.

HE WAS, to set out plainly what he had brought out of that last night's dream-experience, one Bothon, general of the military forces of the great district of Ludekta, the south-westerly provincial division of the continent of Atlantis, which had been colonized, as every Atlantean school child was well aware, some eighteen hundred years before by a series of emigrations from the mother continent. The Naacal language—with minor variations not unlike the differences between American speech and "English English"—was the common language of both continents.

From his native Ludekta the General Bothon had made several voyages to the mother land. The first of these had been to Ghua, the central eastern province, a kind of grand tour made just after his finishing, at the age of twenty-two, his professional course in the Ludekta College of Military Training. He was thus familiar by experience, as were many other cultivated Atlanteans of the upper classes, with the very highly developed civilization of the mother continent. These cultural contacts had been aided by his second visit, and further enhanced not long before the

present period of the dream-experiences when, at the age of thirty-one, Bothon, already of the rank of general, had been sent out as Ambassador to Aglad-Dho, joint capital of the confederated south-eastern provinces of Yish, Knan, and Buathon, one of the most strategic diplomatic posts, and the second most important provincial confederation of the mother continent.

He had served in his ambassadorial capacity for only four months, and then had been abruptly recalled without explanation, but, as he had soon discovered upon his arrival home, because of the privately communicated request of the Emperor himself. His diplomatic superiors at home offered him no censure. Such Imperial requests were not unknown. These gentlemen were, actually, quite unaware of the reasons behind the Imperial request. No explanations had been given them, but there had been no Imperial censure of any kind.

But the General, Bothon, knew the reasons very well, although he kept them strictly to himself. There was, indeed, only one reason, as he was acutely and very well aware.

The requirements of his office had taken him rather frequently to Alu, the continental capital, metropolis of the civilized world.

Here in the great city of Alu were assembled from all known parts of the terrestrial globe the world's diplomats, artists, philosophers, traders and ship-masters. Here in the great ware-houses of solid stone and along the innumerable wharves were piled the world's goods—fabrics and perfumes; strange animals for the delectation of the untravelled curious. Here in the endless stalls and markets were dyed stuffs and silks; tubas and cymbals and musical rattles and lyres; choice woods and implements for the toilet—strigils, and curiously

carved hand-fitting little blocks of soap-stone, and oils innumerable for the freshening of beards and the anointing of bodies. Here were tunics and sandals and belts and thongs of soft-tanned, variously perfumed leathers. Here were displayed carved and cunningly wrought pieces of household furniture—glowing, burnished wall-mirrors of copper and tin and steel, bedsteads of an infinite range and design, cushions of swans' feathers, tables of plain and polished artizanship and of intarsia with metal scrolls set flush to their levels; marquetry work of contrasting woods—chairs and stools and cupboards and chests and foot-rests. Here were ornaments innumerable—fire-screens, and spindles for parchment-rolls, and tongs, and shades for lamps made of the scraped skins of animals; metal lamps of every design, and vegetable oils for the lamps in earthenware jars of many sizes and shapes. Here were foods and wines and dried fruits, and honey of many flavors; grains and dried meats and loaves of barley and wheat-meal past computation. Here in the great street of the armorers were maces and axes and swords and daggers of all the world's varieties and designs; armor of plate and chain—hauberks, and greaves and bassinets, and shelves with rows and rows of the heavy plate and helmets standardized for the use of such fighting men as Bothon himself commanded in their thousands.

HERE were to be seen and examined costly canopies and the elaborate litters in which the slaves of the rich carried their masters through the narrow streets and broad, airy avenues of Alu. Rugs there were in an endless profusion of size and shape and design; rugs from distant Lemuria and from Atlantis and from tropical Antillea, and from the mountainous interior re-

gions of the mother continent itself, where thousands of cunning weavers of fabrics worked at their looms; ordinary rugs of pressed felt, and gorgeous glowing rugs of silk from the southern regions where the mulberry trees grew; rugs, too, and thin, soft draperies of complex patterns made of the wool of lambs and of the long, silk-like hair of the mountain sheep.

Here in Alu, center of the world's culture, were philosophers with their groups of disciples, small or great, propounding their systems on the corners of streets and in the public squares, wrangling incessantly over the end of man, and the greatest good, and the origin of material things. Here were vast libraries containing the essence of all that had been written down concerning science and religion and engineering and the innumerable fine arts, of the civilization of forty thousand years. Here were the temples of religion where the hierarchs propounded the principles of life, colleges of priests studying incessantly more and more deeply into the mysteries of the four principles; teaching the people the endless applications of these esoteric affairs to their conduct and daily lives.

Into this fascinating treasure house of a great civilization the ambassador Bothon had penetrated as often as possible. The excellence of his family background, his own character and personal qualities, and his official position, all combined to make him a welcome guest in the mansions of the members of the emperor's court and of the highest stratum of social life in Alu.

An impressionable young man, most of whose life previous to his appointment as ambassador had been spent in hard training for his military duties and in the rigorous prosecution of these

as he rose rapidly grade by grade by hard man's work in camp and field during his many campaigns in the standing army of Ludekta, the general, Bothon, revelled in these many high social contacts. Very soon he found within himself and growing apace, the strong and indeed natural desire for a type of life to which his backgrounds and achievements had amply entitled him, but of which he had been, so far, deprived because of the well-nigh incessant demands upon him of his almost continuous military service.

In short, the ambassador from Ludekta very greatly came to desire marriage, with some lady of his own caste and, preferably, of this metropolitan city of Alu with its sophistication and wide culture; a lady who might preside graciously over his ambassadorial establishment; who, when his term of office was concluded, would return with him to his native Ludekta in Atlantis, there permanently to grace the fine residence he had in his mind's eye when, a little later, he should retire from the Ludektan army and settle down as a senator into the type of life which he envisaged for his middle years.

HE HAD been both fortunate and unfortunate in his actual falling in love. The lady, who reciprocated his ardent advances, was the Netvissa Ledda, daughter of the Netvis Toldon who was the emperor's brother. The fortunate aspect of this intense and sudden love affair which set all social Alu to commenting upon it, was the altogether human one of a virtually perfect compatibility between the two. Their initial mutual attraction had become a settled regard for each other almost overnight. Within a few days thereafter they were very deeply in love. Humanly considered, the affair

was perfection itself. Every circumstance save one, and that a merely artificial side of the case, gave promise of an ideal union.

The single difficulty in the way of this marriage was, however, most unfortunately, an insuperable one. The Netvissa Ledda, niece of the emperor, belonged of right to the very highest social caste of the empire. The rank and degree of Netvis lay next to Royalty itself and in the case of the family of the Netvis Toldon partook of royalty. Against this fact basic in the structure of the empire's long-established custom, the Ambassador, General Bothon of Ludekta—although a gentleman of the very highest attainments, character, and worth, whose family record reached back a thousand years into the dim past before the colonization of Atlantis, whose reputation was second to none in the empire—the General, Bothon, was a commoner. As such, according to the rigid system prevalent at the court in Alu, capital of the Empire, he was hopelessly ineligible. The marriage was simply out of the question.

The Emperor being called upon to settle this awkward affair, acted summarily, quite in the spirit of one who destroys a hopelessly wounded and suffering creature as an act of mercy. The Emperor took the one course open to him under these circumstances, and the General, Bothon, without any choice being open to him save submission to an Imperial request which had the force of law, took ship for Ludekta, leaving behind him in Alu the highest and dearest hope of his life, irreparably shattered.

For the subsequent conduct of the General Bothon, recently Ludektan Ambassador to Aglad-Dho, there were three very definite contributing reasons. Of these the first and most prom-

inent was the depth and intensity and genuineness of his love for the Netvissa Ledda. Beyond all possible things, he wanted her; and the proud soul of Bothon was very grievously racked and torn at the sudden unexpected and arbitrary separation from her which the Imperial request had brought about.

The voyage from Aglad-Dho to Ludekta, across two sections of the globe's great oceans and through the ship canals and lakes which bisected the southern continent of the western hemisphere, occupied seven weeks. During this period of enforced inaction the bitter chagrin and deep disappointment of Bothon crystallized itself by means of the sustained reflection inevitable under the circumstances. General Bothon arrived in Ludekta in a state of mind which made him ready for anything, provided only it was action. This state of mind was the second of these contributory factors.

The third was the immediate satisfaction of his desire for activity. During the course of his voyage home the ghoulis and, indeed, sub-human factory slaves, the shockingly Simian Gyaa-Hau, had inaugurated a revolt. This had spread, by the time of Bothon's arrival, throughout the entire province of Ludekta. The state sorely needed the efficient services of this, the youngest and most brilliant of its generals, and his reception on landing was more nearly that of a savior of his country than what a virtually disgraced diplomat might expect.

INTO this campaign, which he prosecuted with the utmost vigor and a thorough-going military effectiveness, Bothon threw himself with an abounding energy which even his most ardent Ludektan admirers had not anticipated. At the end of an intensive cam-

paign of less than three weeks, with this very dangerous revolt completely crushed and the leaders of the Gyaa-Hua hanging to a man by great hooks through their neck muscles in dreadful rows along the outer city walls on either side of the great archway that pierced the defense of Ludekta's capital, the General Bothon found himself the hero of Ludekta and the idol of his admiring troops. A rigid disciplinarian, the attitude of the officers and men of the Ludektan standing army towards this general had hitherto been based upon the respect which his great abilities had always commanded. Now he found himself the recipient of something almost like worship because of this last brilliant campaign of his. It had been a *tour de force*.

Although it is highly probable that they would have advanced him because of this achievement in any event, the actual occasion for the action of the Ludektan Senate in rewarding Bothon with the supreme command of the standing army was the speech before that body of the aging generalissimo Tarba. Old Tarba ended his notable panegyric by laying his truncheon, emblem of the supreme command, on the great marble slab before the presiding senator, with a dramatic gesture.

Bothon thus found himself suddenly possessed of that intensive hero worship which would cause the state to acquiesce in anything which its object might suggest. He was, at the same time, in supreme command of the largest sectional standing army of the entire continent of Atlantis; an army, thanks chiefly to his own efficiency, probably the best trained and most effective fighting unit then extant.

Under the combined effect of the contributing causes and his new authority General Bothon made up his mind. On the eleventh day after his triumphal

entry into Ludekta's capital city forty-seven Ludektan war vessels freshly outfitted, their oar-slaves supplemented by a reserve of the Gyaa-Hau, selected for the power and endurance of their gorilla-like bodies, with new skin sails throughout the fleet, and the flower of the Ludektan army on board, sailed out from Ludekta westward for Alu under the command of the General Bothon.

IT WAS precisely simultaneous with the arrival of this war fleet off the shores of the great city of Alu that there began unprecedented natural disturbances affecting the entire area of the mother continent. These were comparable to nothing recorded in the capital's carefully kept slate and parchment records, which went back over a period of thousands of years.

The first presage of these impending calamities took the form of a coppery tinge which replaced the blue of the sky. Without any warning the long ground-swell of this Western Ocean changed abruptly, along with the color of the water, into a kind of dull brick-grey, to short, choppy, spray-capped waves. These tossed even the great Ludektan war galleys so violently as to shatter many of the sweeps. The wind, to the consternation of several of Bothon's captains, appeared to come from every quarter at once! It tore the heavy skin sails of the Ludektan galleys away from their copper rings and bolts in some cases. In others it split the sails in clean straight lines as though they had been slit with sharp knives.

Undaunted by these manifestations and the reports of his augurs who had cast their lots and slain their sheep and fowls in a hasty series of divinations to account, if possible, for this unfavorable reception at the hands of the elements, the indomitable will of

Bothon forced his fleet to an orderly landing. He sent forthwith as his herald to the Emperor himself, his highest ranking sub-general, accompanied by an imposing guard of honor. On slate tablets Bothon had set forth his demand in his own hand. This was in the form of a set of alternatives. The Emperor was asked to receive him as Generalissimo of the military forces of Ludekta, and to consent to his immediate marriage with the Netvissa Ledda; or, he, Bothon, would proceed forthwith to the siege of Alu and take the lady of his heart by force and arms.

The message prayed the Emperor to elect the first alternative. It also set forth briefly and in formal heraldic terms the status of the ancient family of Bothon.

The Emperor had been very seriously annoyed at this challenge, as he chose to regard it. He felt that his office and dignity had been outraged. He crucified Bothon's entire delegation.

The siege of Alu began forthwith under that menacing copper-tinted sky and to the accompaniment of a rumbling series of little earthquakes.

NOT only not within the memory of living men, but, as the records indicated, during its entire history over thousands of years as the metropolis of the civilized world, had there been any previous hostile manifestations against the great city of Alu. That anything like this terrible campaign which the renowned General Bothon of Ludekta set in motion against her might come to pass, had never even remotely occurred to anyone in Alu. So promptly did Bothon launch his attack that the tortured bodies of the members of his delegation to the Emperor had not yet ceased writhing on their row of crosses before he had penetrated, at the head

of his trained legionaries, to a point within two squares of the Imperial Palace which stood at the center of the great city.

There had been virtually no resistance. This intensive campaign would have been triumphantly concluded within twenty minutes, the Emperor probably captured along with all his Palace guards and household, the person of the Lady Ledda secured by this ardent lover of hers, and the entire objective of the expedition accomplished, save for what in modern legal phraseology would have been described as *An Act of God*.

The premonitory earth-shakings which had accompanied this armed invasion culminated, at that point in the advance of Bothon's army, in a terrific seismic cataclysm. The stone-paved streets opened in great gaping fissures. Massive buildings crashed tumultuously all about and upon the triumphantly advancing Ludektans. The General, Bothon, at the head of his troops, dazed and deafened and hurled violently upon the ground, retained consciousness long enough to see three quarters of his devoted following engulfed, smashed, torn to fragments, crushed into unrecognizable heaps of bloody pulp; and this holocaust swiftly and mercifully obliterated from before his failing vision by the drifting dust from millions of tons of crumbled masonry.

He awakened in the innermost keep of the dungeon in Alu's citadel.

COMING quietly into Meredith's bedroom about ten o'clock in the morning, Dr. Cowlington, who had made up his mind overnight on a certain matter, quietly led his initial conversation with his observation-patient around to the subject which had been most prominent in his mind since their conference of yesterday over the

strange linguistic terms which Meredith had noted down.

"It has occurred to me that I might very well tell you about something quite out of the ordinary which came under my notice seven or eight years ago. It happened while I was chief intern in the Connecticut State Hospital for the Insane. I served there for two years under Dr. Floyd Haviland before I went into private practice. We had a few private patients in the hospital, and one of these, who was in my particular charge, was a gentleman of middle-age who had come to us because of Haviland's enormous reputation, without commitment. This gentleman, whom I will call 'Smith', was neither legally nor actually 'insane'. His difficulty, which had interfered very seriously with the course of his life and affairs, would ordinarily be classified as 'delusions'. He was with us for nearly two months. As a voluntary patient of the institution, and being a man of means, he had private rooms. He was in every way normal except for his intensive mental pre-occupation with what I have called his delusions. In daily contact with him during this period I became convinced *that Mr. Smith was not suffering from anything like a delusive affection of the mind*.

"I diagnosed his difficulty—and Dr. Haviland agreed with me—that this patient, Smith, *was suffering mentally from the effects of an ancestral memory*.

"Such a case is so rare as to be virtually unique. The average psychiatrist would go through a life-time working at his specialty without encountering anything of the sort. There are, however, recorded cases. We were able to send our patient home in a mental condition of almost complete normality. As sometimes occurs in mental cases, his virtual cure was accomplished by making our diagnosis very clear to him

—impressing upon his mind through reiterated and very positive statements that he was in no sense of the word demented, and that his condition, while unusual, was not outside the range and limitations of complete normality.”

“IT MUST have been a very interesting case,” said Meredith. His reply was dictated by nothing deeper than a desire to be courteous. For his mind was full of the affairs of the General, Bothon, raging now in his prison-chamber; his mind harried, anxious over the fate of his surviving soldiers; that lurid glare, dimmed by the remoteness of his flame-tinted prison-chamber, in his eyes; his mind tortured and his keen sense of hearing stultified by the sustained, dreadful roaring of that implacable sea. He, Meredith, for reasons far too deep for his own analysis, felt utterly incapable of telling Dr. Cowlington what was transpiring in those dreams of his. All his inmost basic instincts were warning him, though subconsciously, that what he might tell now, if he would, could not possibly be believed!

Dr. Cowlington, looking at his patient, saw a face drawn and lined as though from some devastating mental stress; a deeply introspective expression in the eyes, which, professionally speaking, he did not like. The doctor considered a moment before resuming, erect in his chair, his knees crossed, his finger-tips joined in a somewhat judicial attitude.

“Frankly, Meredith, I emphasized the fact that the man I have called Smith was in no sense insane because I feel that I must go farther and tell you that the nature of his apparent ‘delusions’ was, in one striking particular, related to your own case. I did not wish to give you the slightest alarm over the perfect soundness of your own men-

talities! To put the matter plainly, Mr. Smith *remembered*, although rather vaguely and dimly, certain phases of those ancestral memories I mentioned, and was able to reproduce a number of the terms of some unknown and apparently prehistoric language. Meredith —” the doctor turned and looked intensely into the eyes of his now interested patient, “—*there were three or four of Smith’s words identical with yours!*”

“Good God!” Meredith exclaimed, “What were the words, Doctor? Did you make notes of them?”

“Yes, I have them here,” answered the psychiatrist.

Meredith was out of his chair and leaning eagerly over the doctor’s shoulder long before Cowlington had his papers arranged. He gazed with a consuming intensity at the words and phrases carefully typed on several sheets of foolscap; listened, with an almost tremulous attention, while Dr. Cowlington carefully reproduced the sounds of these uncouth terms. Then, taking the sheets and resuming his chair, he read through all that had been written down, pronouncing the words, though very quietly, under his breath, his lips barely moving.

HE WAS pale, and shaking from head to foot when he rose at last and handed back, hands trembling, the thin fascicle of papers to its owner. Dr. Cowlington looked at him anxiously, his professional mind alert, his fears somewhat aroused over the wisdom of this experiment of his in bringing his former case thus abruptly to his patient’s attention. Dr. Cowlington felt, if he had cared to put his impression into words, somewhat baffled. He could not, despite his long and careful training in dealing with mental, nervous, and “borderland” cases, quite put his

acute professional finger upon just which one of the known simple and complex emotions was, for this moment, dominating this very interesting patient of his.

Dr. Cowlington would have been even more completely puzzled if he had known.

For Meredith, reading through the strange babblings of the patient, Smith, had recognized all the words and terms, and had lit upon the phrase:

"Our beloved Bothon has disappeared."

Dr. Cowlington, sensing accurately that it might be unwise to prolong this particular interview, concluded wisely that Meredith would most readily regain his normal poise and equanimity if left alone to cope with whatever, for the time-being, held possession of his mind, rose quietly and walked over to the bedroom door.

He paused there, however, for an instant, before leaving the room, and looked back at the man. Meredith had not, apparently, so much as noted the doctor's movements towards departure. His mind, very obviously, was turned inward. He was, it appeared, entirely oblivious to his surroundings.

And Dr. Cowlington, whose professional outward deportment, acquired through years of contact with abnormal people, had not wholly obliterated a kindly disposition, noted with a certain emotion of his own that there were unchecked tears plainly visible in his patient's inward-gazing eyes.

SUMMONED back to Meredith's room an hour later by one of his house nurses, Dr. Cowlington found his patient restored to his accustomer urbane normality.

"I asked you to come up for a moment, Doctor," began Meredith, "because I wanted to inquire if there is

anything that you would care to give a patient to induce sleep." Then, with a deprecating smile: "The only such things I know about are morphine and laudanum! I don't know very much about medicine and naturally you wouldn't want to give me one of those any more than I would want to take it."

Dr. Cowlington resumed his judicial manner. He thought rapidly about this unexpected request. He took into consideration how his story about the patient, Smith, had appeared to upset Meredith. He deliberately refrained from inquiring why Meredith wanted a sleeping potion. Then he nodded his head.

"I use a very simple preparation;" he said. "It is non-habit-forming; based on a rather dangerous drug, chloral; but, as I use it for my patients, compounded with an aromatic syrup and diluted with half a tumbler of water, it works very well. I will send some up to you but remember, please, four teaspoonfuls of the syrup is the outside dose. Two will probably be enough. Never more than four at any time, and not more than one dose in twenty-four hours."

Dr. Cowlington rose, came over to Meredith, and looked at the place where he had struck the side of his head against the marble wall of his shower-bath. The bruise was still there. The doctor passed his fingers lightly over the contusion.

"It's beginning to go down," he remarked. Then he smiled pleasantly, again nodded his head at Meredith, and, started to leave. Meredith stopped him as he was about to go out of the room.

"I wanted to ask you," said Meredith, "I wanted to ask you, Doctor, if you would be willing to put me in touch with the man to whom you referred as 'Smith?'"

The doctor shook his head. "I'm

sorry, Mr. Smith died two years ago."

IN TEN minutes the house nurse fetched in a small tray. On it was a tumbler, a mixing spoon, and a freshly put up eight-ounce bottle containing a reddish colored, pleasant-tasting syrup.

Twenty minutes later, Meredith, who had compromised on three teaspoons, was deeply asleep on his bed; and the General, Bothon, in the innermost dungeon-chamber of the great citadel of Alu, was standing poised in the center of that dungeon's smooth stone floor, tensed to leap in any direction; while all about him the rending crashes of thousands of tons of the riven and falling masonry of the citadel itself was deafening him against all other sounds except the incessant and indescribably thunderous fury of the now utterly mad-denied ocean. The lurid glare of the fires from without had been markedly heightened. Detonation after detonation came to Bothon's ears at frequent intervals. The Aluans were blowing up this central portion of their great city, in order to check the advance of the conflagration which had raged for days and nights and was utterly beyond control. These detonations seemed actually faint to the alert man in that prison room against the hideous crashing of the sections of the citadel itself, and the sustained roar of the ocean.

Abruptly the crisis for which he had been waiting arrived. The stone flooring beneath his feet buckled and sagged at his right. He whirled about and leaped far in the other direction, pressing himself, hands and arms stretched out above his head, against the wall of the prison-chamber, his heart pounding wildly, his breath coming in great gasps and sobs as the stifling, earthquake-deadened air about him shrank to a sudden and devastating attenuation. Then the solid wall opposite split in a

tearing gap from top to bottom, and an even more stifling cloud of white dust sifted abruptly through the room as the ceiling was riven asunder.

Stifling, choking, fighting for breath and life, the General, Bothon, lowered his arms and whirled about again in the direction of this thunderous breakage, and groped his way across the now precarious flooring in the faint hope of discovering an avenue of escape. He struggled up a steep mound of *débris* through the grey darkness of the hanging dust where a few seconds before there had been a level floor of solid masonry. He groped his way through thicker clouds of the drifting, settling stone-dust, skirted the irregular edges of yawning holes and toiled up and down mounded heaps of rubble, far past the place where the confining wall of his dungeon had stood, onward and forward resolutely towards that vague goal of freedom.

At last, the resources of his mighty body spent, his eyes two tortured red holes, his mouth and throat one searing pain, Bothon emerged across the last hill of rubbish which had been the citadel of Alu and came out upon the corner edge of one of the largest of the city's great public squares.

FOR the first time in the course of his progress out of that death trap, Bothon suddenly trod on something soft and yielding. He paused. He could hardly see, and he crouched and felt with his hands, under the thickly mounded dust.

It was the body of a man, in chain mail. Bothon, exhaled a painful breath of satisfaction. He rolled the body over, freeing it from the pounds of dust upon it, and slid his hand along the copper-studded leather belt to where a short, heavy, one-handed battle-axe was attached. This he drew from its sheath

Then from the dead man's silken tunic he tore off a large section and cleansed his eyes and mouth and wiped the sweat-caked dust from his face.

Finally he took from the corpse a heavy leathern purse.

He lay down for a few moments beside the dead soldier on the soft dust for a brief rest. Some ten minutes later he rose, stretched himself, testing the heavy axe with three or four singing strokes through the clearing air, and dusted out and readjusted his garments, finally tightening a loosened sandal thong.

He stood free now in the center of Alu. He was adequately armed. A great gust of energy surged through him. He oriented himself; then he turned with an instinct as sure as a homing bee's in the direction he had been seeking, and began to march at the unhurrying, space-devouring pace of a Ludektan legionary, straight for the Imperial Palace.

Bothon had thoroughly settled in his mind the answer to a question which, for the first few days of his captivity had puzzled him greatly. Why had he been left alone and undisturbed in that confinement; food and water brought to him at regular intervals in accordance with the ordinary routine of the citadel? Why, to put the matter plainly, having been obviously captured by the Emperor's retainers while lying unconscious within two squares of the Imperial Palace, had he not been summarily crucified? His keen trained mind had apprised him that the answer was to be found in the hideous turmoil of the raging sea and in the fearful sounds of a disintegrating city. The Emperor had been too greatly occupied by those cataclysms even to command the punishment of this leader of such an armed attack against the world's metropolis as had not been known in all the long

history of the mother continent.

Skirting its enormous outer walls, Bothon came at last to the massive chief entrance-way to the Imperial Palace. This enormous structure, its basic walls eight feet thick, stood massive, magnificent, intact. Without any hesitation he began mounting the many broad steps straight towards the magnificent entrance-gates of copper and gold and porphyry.

Before these gates, in the rigid line and under the command of an officer beneath whose corselet appeared the pale blue tunic of the Emperor's household-guards, stood a dozen fully armed soldiers. One of these, at a word from the officer, ran down the steps to turn back this intruder. Bothon slew him with a single crashing stroke and continued to mount the steps. At this a shouted command of the officer sent the entire troop down the steps upon him in close order. Bothon paused, and, waiting until the foremost was no more than the space of two of the broad steps above him, leaped lightly to his right. Then as the foremost four of the soldiers passed beyond him under the impetus of their downward charge, Bothon as lightly leaped back again, his heavy axe falling upon the troop's flank with deadly, short, quick-swinging blows.

Before they could collect themselves the officer and five of his men lay dead upon the steps. Leaving the demoralized remainder to gather themselves together as best they might, Bothon leaped up the intervening steps and was through the great entrance-doors, and, with a pair of lightning-like right-and-left strokes of his axe, had disposed of the two men-at-arms stationed just inside the doorway.

HIS way into the Palace now entirely unobstructed, Bothon sped through well-remembered rooms and

along broad corridors into the heart of the Imperial Palace of Alu.

Within thirty seconds he had located the entrance to the brother of the Emperor, Netvis Toldon's apartments, and had passed through the doorway.

He discovered the family reclining about the horseshoe-shaped table in the refectory, for it was the hour of the evening meal. He paused in the doorway, was met with surprised glances, and bowed low to the Netvis Toldon.

"I beseech you to pardon this intrusion, my Lord Netvis. It would be inexcusable under other circumstances, at a more favorable time." The nobleman returned no answer, only stared in surprise. Then, the dear lady of his heart, the Netvissa Ledda, rose to her feet from her place at her father's table, her eyes wide with wonderment. A dawning realization of what this strange invasion might mean, made her lovely face suddenly the hue of the Aluan roses. She looked at this heroically formed lover of hers, her soul in her eyes.

"Come, my lady Ledda!" said Bothon quickly, and as lightly as a deer the Netvissa Ledda ran to him.

He took her arm, very quietly, and, before the assembled members of the family of Toldon had recovered from their surprise, the two were hastening along the corridor towards the palace entrance.

From around the first corner before them came then abrupt sounds of armed men. They paused, listening, and Bothon shifted his axe into his right hand and stepped before the lady Ledda, but she laid firm hands upon his left arm. "This way, swiftly!" she whispered, and led him down a narrow passage-way at the wide corridor's left. This they traversed in haste, and had barely negotiated a sharp turn when they heard the guard-troop rush along the main

corridor, and a voice, commanding:

"To the apartment of my Lord, the Netvis Toldon!"

The narrow passage-way led them past cook-rooms and scullery-chambers, and ended at a small door which opened upon a narrow court. Rapidly traversing this, they emerged upon a square at the west side of the palace, and well before any pursuit could have traced their course, were indistinguishable among the vast concourse of the people who thronged the wide avenues of Alu.

Bothon now resumed the direction of their course of escape. Leading the way across a larger adjacent square, he reached the secluded corner, mounded about with *dèbris*, where he had secured his weapon. It was not yet past the early dusk of a mid-summer evening, and now there was nothing to interfere with his keen vision.

Yes, it was as he had guessed from the quality of that torn fragment of silken tunic with which he had wiped his tortured eyes free of the stone-dust. The dead man was an officer of one of the Imperial Legions.

Seating the Lady Ledda upon a block of granite and requesting her to watch, Bothon knelt swiftly beside the dead body and busied himself upon it.

AT THE end of two intensive minutes the Netvissa Ledda looked up at his touch upon her shoulder to see her lover apparelled from head to foot in the uniform, armor, and accoutrements of an Elton of the Imperial Legion of the Hawk.

Then they hurried southward, side by side, across the great square with its desolation of shattered buildings, towards one of the few remaining residences of the rich before which four coal-black slaves in the livery of their household were lowering an ornamental litter to the ground.

From the luxurious vehicle, as they arrived beside it, there emerged a stout citizen who stared at them inquiringly, his initial fear disappearing at recognition of the Emperor's niece and the uniform of an Imperial Legion.

"We request the loan of your litter, my lord," said Bothon.

"Most willingly," returned the citizen, bowing.

Bothon expressed thanks, handed his companion into the litter, distributed a handful of silver among the four slaves, and gave the destination to the Negro who stood beside the forward left-hand pole. Then he climbed in himself and drew the red silk curtains together.

The strong litter-poles strained and creaked as the load was hoisted to four brawny shoulders, and then the litter swung away from the residence of its still bowing and smirking owner towards the military enclosure which housed and guarded the flying-vessels of the Aluvian standing army.

"You may have observed how very completely I have entrusted my Imperial person to you," remarked the Netvissa Ledda, smiling. She was very well aware of the reasons for the Imperial request which had sent Bothon back to Ludekta, and for the first armed invasion against the Aluvian metropolis. "I have not so much as inquired as to our destination!"

"It is my intention to seek safety to the northwest," answered Bothon gravely. "I am convinced the prediction of Bal, Lord of Fields, as to the destruction of the Mother Continent, is not a mere classic to be learned, as we learned it in our childhood, as a formal exercise in rhetoric. Here, all about us, is the evidence. More, my four augurs warned me of the continent's danger ere I brought my war-galleys up upon the beaches of Alu. The four great forces, they insisted, were in collusion

to that end. Do we not see and hear them at work? Fire raging through the land; earth shaking mightily; winds such as never were encountered hitherto upon the planet, else the old records lie! Water, the commotion of which surpasses all experiences;—is it not so, my beloved? Am I not constrained to speak thus to be heard amidst this hellish tumult?"

The Lady Ledda nodded, grave now in her turn.

"There are many deafened in the palace," she remarked. "Where are we to go for refuge?"

"We depart straight this night, for the great mountains of 'A-Wah-Ii," answered Bothon, "if so be the four great forces allow us possession of a war-chariot. And, to that end, your ring, my beloved."

THE Lady Ledda nodded again, understandingly, and removed from the middle finger of her right hand the ring of the two suns and the eight-pointed star which, as a member of the Royal Family, she was entitled to wear. Bothon received it, and slipped it upon the little finger of his right hand.

The sentinel on guard before the barracks of the officer commanding the military enclosure of the Aluvian supply-barracks, saluted the commanding-looking Elton of the Legion of the Hawk who stepped down from the ornamented litter. The Elton addressed him in formal military phrases.

"Report at once to the Ka-Kalbo Netro, the arrival of the Elton Barko of the Legion of the Hawk, conveying a member of the Imperial household into exile. I am requisitioning one battle-chariot of capacity for two persons, and officer's rations sufficient for fourteen days, together with the medicinal supply for a full kit-va of men. My authority, the Imperial Signet. Be-

hold!"

The sentinel saluted the sun-and-star ring of the Emperor, repeated his orders like an efficient automaton, saluted the Elton of the Hawk Legion, and departed at the double to fetch the commandant, the Ka-Kalbo Netro.

The Ka-Kalbo arrived promptly in answer to this summons. He saluted the Imperial Signet, and, as a Ka-Kalbo outranked an Elton by one full grade, was punctiliously saluted according to military usage by the Elton Barko of the Legion of the Hawk, an officer whose personal acquaintance he had not previously made.

Within ten minutes the Netvissa Ledda had been ceremoniously carried to and placed upon her seat in the commandeered battle-chariot, and the Elton Barko had taken his place beside her. Then, the dozen sweating mechanics who had carried out their commandant's orders in record time, standing in a stiff, saluting row, the battle-chariot started off at a stiff gallop, the driver standing and plying his long thong with loud, snapping reports over the horses' backs, while at the great chariot's rear the spare-horse leader whistled continuously to the four relay animals which galloped behind.

The heights of 'A-Wah-Ii, to the northwest, gave some promise, in Bothon's opinion, of security from the anciently predicted submersion of the continent. Those towering mountains would, at least, be among the last sections to sink, should the gas belts, hypothesized by the scientists of the mother continent, explode, and remove the underseas support of this great land of the globe's most ancient and noble civilization.

Shortly after daybreak, and accurately, according to the map and careful explanations of the painstaking Ka-Kalbo Netro, the chariot paused in the

centre of a great level table-land one quarter of the way to his destination. The country was utterly uninhabited. They were relatively safe here in a region only lightly visited by the earthquakes, and not at all by fire. The roar of the north wind troubled the Netvissa Ledda severely. Bothon barely noticed it. He was now convinced that he was losing his sense of hearing.

They ate and slept and resumed their journey at noon after a readjustment of the provisions and a change of the now rested animals.

Their four days' journey steadily northwest was uneventful. The charioteer drove onward steadily. On the fourth day, as the coppery ball which was the smoking sun reached and touched a flat horizon, they caught their first view of the lofty summits of the 'A-Wah-Ii' region, a goal of a possible immunity.

DR. COWLINGTON, an anxious look on his face, was standing beside Meredith's bed when he awakened in mid-morning. He had slept twenty hours. However, what the doctor thought of as his patient's *mental condition* was so entirely normal, and his cheerfulness so pronounced after his protracted sleep, that Dr. Cowlington was reassured, and changed his mind about removing the bottle of sleeping medicine. Plainly it had had an excellent effect on Meredith.

Stretched out in his usual quiet-inducing attitude on the davenport just before lunch, Meredith suddenly ceased reading and put down his magazine. It had occurred to him that he had *heard* none of the turmoil of Alu during that waking period. He sat up, puzzled. Bothon, he remembered, had been hearing the sounds about him only dimly, a strange, perhaps a significant, coincidence.

He felt the bruise behind his right ear. It was no longer even slightly painful to the touch. He pressed his fingertips firmly against the place. The contusion was now barely perceptible to the sense of touch.

He reported the apparent loss of what the ear-specialist Gatefield had named his "clairaudience" to Dr. Cowlington after lunch.

"Your bruise is going down," said the doctor significantly. He examined the posterior edge of Meredith's right temporal area.

"I thought so," remarked the doctor, nodding. "Your secondary 'hearing' began with that injury to your head. As it goes down, some obscure stimulation of the auditory apparatus, which accounts for your ability to *hear* those sounds, diminishes accordingly. You could probably *hear* only some stupendous sound from there now. And in a day or so I predict that you will be *hearing* nothing more, and then you can go home!"

And, within an hour came the "stupendous sound" in very truth. It broke in upon Meredith's quiet reading once more as though someone had opened that sound-proof door.

A curious, secondary, mental vision accompanied it. It was as though Meredith, in his own proper person, yet through the strange connection of his personality with the General, Bothon, stood on the heights of Tharan-Yud, overlooking the stricken city of Alu. The utter fury of mountainous waves accompanied the now titanic rumblings of malignant earth, the wholesale crashing of the cyclopean masonry of Alu as the vast city crumbled and melted beneath his horrified eyes. With these hellish horrors went the wild roaring of ravaging flame, and the despairing, hysterical cacophony of Alu's doomed millions.

Then there came, at last, a sound as of the veritable yawning of the nethermost watery gulf of earth, and the high sun itself was blotted out by a monstrous green wall of advancing death. The sea rose up and fell upon accursed Alu, drowning forever the shrieks of utter despair, the piping and chittering of the obscurely gnawing Gyaa-Hua distracted at last from their loathsome banquet—hissings, roarings, shriekings, whinings, tearings, seethings—a cacophony more than human ears might bear, a sight of utter devastation more onerous than man might look upon, and live.

THERE came to Meredith a merciful stupor, as the waters of Mu-Iadon closed in forever over the mother continent, and as his consciousness failed him, he emerged once more out of that quiet bedroom—away from his overlooking of the world's major catastrophe, and as Bothon, walked beside the Lady Ledda along a wooded ravine in 'A-Wah-Ii,' goal of safety, among laden fruit trees, yet not, it seemed, upon the towering heights of those noble mountains but upon an *island* about the shores of which rolled and roared a brown and viscid ocean choked with the mud which had been the soil of the mother continent.

"We are safe here, it would appear, my Bothon," said the Netvissa Ledda. "Let us lie down and sleep, for I am very weary."

And after watching for a little space while the Lady Ledda reclined and slept, Bothon lay down beside her and fell at once into the deep and dreamless slumber of utter physical exhaustion.

MEREDITH awakened on his day-enport. The room was dark, and when he had risen, switched on the lights and looked at his watch, he found

that it was four o'clock in the morning. He undressed and went to bed and awakened three hours later without having dreamed.

A world and an era had come to its cataclysmic end, and he had been witness of it.

The contusion on his head had disappeared, Dr. Cowlington observed later in the morning.

"I think you can go home now, you'll never hear again," said the doctor, in

his judicial manner. "But, by the way, Meredith, what, if you can remember, was the name of that 'mother continent' of yours?"

"We called it Mu," said Meredith.

The doctor was silent for a while; then he nodded his head. He had made up his mind.

"I thought so," said he, gravely.

"Why?" Meredith asked.

"Because *Smith* called it that," replied the doctor.

Vignettes

OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Edison

**He was one of the greatest minds of modern times
and his achievements are far beyond any valuation**

THOMAS ALVA EDISON was born at Milan, Ohio, February 11, 1847, of Dutch ancestry on his father's side and Scottish on his mother's. At the age of seven his parents moved to Port Huron, Michigan. Here he secured the rudiments of an education, but was forced to get out into the world at an early age and earn his living. At 12 he became a railroad newsboy and simultaneously conducted a small newspaper enterprise. Turning his attention to telegraphy he quickly became a Morse-key expert and easily secured the position of night operator at his home town.

He became interested in chemistry by reading books on that science and was allowed by his parents to fit up a laboratory in the attic of the house they occupied. Here he carried on his experiments during the day instead of getting enough sleep to fit him properly for his job at night. Consequently he soon lost his position by being caught asleep on duty. He then began the life of a wandering telegraph operator in various cities, going from one place to another without difficulty for at that time there was a great demand for experts at the key. After several years of that kind of life he drifted eastward, finally landing in Boston, and had the good fortune there to get hold of a copy of the works of Faraday,

which impressed him deeply. In that city in 1868 he took out his first patent—his first invention—an electrical vote-recording machine for use in legislative bodies.

From Boston he went to New York, still in the character of a wandering operator, and continually short of money because his surplus earnings were spent as fast as they accumulated in books, experiments in chemistry and electricity, and in models of inventions. There in 1869, he perfected certain improvements in stock tickers, which brought him quickly a considerable amount of money, about \$40,000, and with it he opened a laboratory in Newark and began the manufacture of the numerous electrical devices which his fertile brain had conceived.

However, he soon found himself in financial straits and called one day at the office of Dr. Norvin Green, the president of the Western Union Telegraph Company, to try to interest him in his patents. He found the doctor endeavoring to get into telegraphic communication with Albany. There was trouble somewhere along the line, and no one seemed to be able to locate the place or the cause. Edison asked to be allowed to solve the problem, and in two hours had located the difficulty within a few miles. Green was so impressed with the performance that he not only

gave the young man the hearing he sought, but when it was concluded advanced the money Edison needed to relieve his financial difficulties and took an interest in his plant on behalf of his company. For it Edison invented and put into practice, in turn, his automatic duplex and quadruplex systems of telegraphy, by the latter of which, on one wire, two messages in each direction could be sent simultaneously, and recorded at the receiving end on chemically prepared paper, at the rate of 3500 words per minute. For these he was handsomely compensated.

Now at last in comfortable circumstances, he turned his attention from telegraphy to telephony. By then A. Graham Bell had demonstrated the practicability of the latter, had devised an excellent receiver, but his transmitter was unsatisfactory. The Western Union Company was backing him and called in Edison. Edison in a short time produced his carbon transmitter, in which compressed lamp-black buttons were used to obtain the necessary variable resistance in the circuit. He sold this to the company for \$100,000. Shortly afterwards he perfected his electromagnetograph which brought him \$250,000 for the American and English rights alone. Incidentally Edison devised the electric pen, which developed into the mimeograph, for the multiplication of typewriting.

Most modern inventions result from the contributions of many minds, and it is often difficult for the courts to determine priority, but when Edison made application in 1877 for his notable accomplishment—a "phonograph or speaking machine," the U. S. Patent office could discover no previous record of this sort. The original model, costing \$18, was a cylinder covered with tinfoil and turned with a hand crank. When this first crude model had been constructed, the words spoken into it, and repeated from it, were those of the first verse of the familiar nursery rhyme "Mary had a little lamb," and the voice was that of Edison himself. Ten years afterwards he developed a motor-driven machine with cylindrical wax records which speedily became popular. Later he invented a disk form reproducing with a diamond point for music, and the "Ediphone" for office dictation.

IN 1879 Edison turned his attention to the electric light. The arc light had already been invented, and put into practical use to a considerable extent for highway illumination. But it was too expensive, too brilliant and too noisy for interior use. In its stead Edison proposed and perfected the familiar small glass globe, exhausted of its air, and fitted with the now nearly forgotten carbon filament heated to incandescence. On October 21, 1879, after expending more than \$40,000 in fruitless experiments, he succeeded in making an incandescent lamp in which a loop of carbonized cotton thread glowed in a vacuum for over 40 hours. After a large number of trials of other materials, one that was constructed of

bamboo fiber of a particular variety, stood the test and strain put upon it long enough to make the discovery commercially practical. From this beginning has sprung the highly perfected tungsten filament bulbs of the present day, which are in use by the hundreds of millions throughout the world.

The following decade was devoted to the invention and exploitation of methods for the generation and distribution of electric light, heat and power, including three-wire system, underground mains, improved dynamos and motors, and an electric railway for carrying freight and passengers. From 1891 to 1900 he was chiefly engaged on a magnetic method of concentrating iron ores, and from 1900 to 1910 in the development of a new kind of storage battery, using an alkaline solution with nickel hydrate as the positive and iron oxide as the negative material. In 1891 he applied for a patent on a "kinetoscopic camera" for taking motion pictures on a band of film to be viewed by peeping into a box, and later for projecting them on a screen.

IN THE *Scientific American*, December 25, 1875, he described an unknown "etheric force," which manifested itself by sparks passing between carbon points at a distance from an interrupted current. In 1883 he patented what became known as "the Edison effect," the passage of electricity from a filament to a plate of metal inside an incandescent lamp globe (a forerunner of the radio tube), and in 1885 a method of transmitting telegraphic signals from moving trains or between ships by induction. Other of his notable inventions were the cinematograph and the magnetic ore separator. He was the discoverer of a method of making carboric acid synthetically; and when the World War broke out, cutting off the supply from Europe, he built a factory for its manufacture in an incredibly short time. During the war he worked on naval problems for the Government and on the production of phenol and other chemicals. In 1927 he was admitted to the National Academy of Sciences.

In his combined workshop and laboratory at Menlo Park and later at Orange, New Jersey, Edison had been incessantly engaged in various forms of invention for more than 50 years and had taken out one thousand thirty-three patents up to April, 1928.

A man of tireless energy, and a sufferer from early manhood under the handicap of deafness, he maintained throughout his maturity, and carried into his green old age, the individuality and the simplicity which is typically the heritage of the American. His name is a household word in all parts of the civilized world. In his own country he was awarded by popular vote the title of its first citizen. Plain in manner and dress, forceful in speech, his definition of genius as "one per cent inspiration and ninety-nine per cent perspiration" epitomizes his life and career perfectly. He died October 18, 1931.

SCIENTIFIC



Where was the ancient land from which the peoples who carried the ancient legends of Pan with them when they fled from an unknown catastrophe? Was it actually the sunken continent in the Pacific we today call Lemuria?

The name, Pan, is bound up with the goat figure which we have come to recognize in the Amerind dances as the Atlantic dragon or the old Fire-god. He is also identified as the enemy of Wind God, the Twins, and the mischievous wolf



Chateaubriand learned from the Algonquins that Michigan was regarded as sacred land, inextricably tied up with legends concerning Pan; and it is true that the knowledge of world geography in this area is inexplicable



How can we account for the mines under the forests of Michigan? Are they linked with the sunken continent? The miners used tools of copper hardened in a way we cannot duplicate in our civilization



Why do the Algonquins, who suggested the Feast of Thanksgiving, insist that it was an ancient feast they celebrated in commemoration of a day long past when their ancestors came from a land now disappeared?

MYSTERIES

THE GHOST OF PAN

By L. TAYLOR HANSEN

What is the true story behind the most intriguing of all ancient legends, the myths concerning the god, Pan?

THE poet who wrote that "The Great God Pan is dead" wasn't an archaeologist. And he certainly had never seen, for example, the "Devil Dance" of the Apaches, or he would have known better. For if he had delved into archaeology, or had witnessed certain weird Amerind dances under still weirder settings of kiva silence, or night and stars, lit by a fitful fire, he might have recognized the ghost of the ancient deity, and have held his tongue.

For the student of the classics, the name of "Pan" is inextricably bound up with that goat-like figure which in Amerind dances we have come to recognize as the Atlantic Dragon or the Old Fire-god. Through Amerind legend we have also come to recognize his ancient enemies, the Wind-god or the Elder-Twin, and the Wind-gods ally the Younger-Twin, or the Mischievous Wolf.

In the light of Amerind legend, neither the Greek nor the Egyptian mythology throws much light upon our early figure. Apparently the true Atlantic Dragon is earlier than Egypt. Osiris is as much an amalgamated figure as possible. As most learned Indians will point out, (and I have particularly the Yaqui Chief, Sedillo, who studied in Egypt, in mind) Osiris has many qualities of the Wind-god or "Breath Master" and he is spoken of as the elder twin of the Wolf, Set, although he is supposed to be of the Serpent Totem. Could the original Serpent have been older than all three? Or did the great war of the "Terrible Two"¹ against the Dragon take place so long before the rise of Egypt that the genealogy of the god Osiris had become garbled with that of his conquered enemy? As far as that goes, the figure of Pan himself, or the Amen-figure of Northwest Africa is garbled, as he is spoken of and represented as the "Two-horned," which may, like the Norse "Song of the Sun," refer to twins or some power which was "double-led."²

There are two great hints which come out of Greece. One is the famous statement that Pan

was one of the eight gods who went before the Twelve gods.³ Could this refer to the fact that the Venus Calendar has eight terrestrial cycles to the thirteen of our neighbor planet? Undoubtedly, as is the way with calendars, including our own, those periods were named for great leaders, probably so long deified that their very existence had become doubtful to the average man who used that method of reckoning. This would seem to identify the Venus Calendar with the people who revered Pan.

Another important hint is the fact that Pan played upon curious little pipes which were known to the Hellenes as "The Pipes of Pan." Now it may be no more than coincidence that these are also to be seen in China, where they have thirteen pipes, and are today, usually used for measuring grain.⁴ And it may be but another coincidence that China traces her descent from the "Great Architect" known as "Pan-Ku" who spent eighteen thousand years in "shaping a universe" fit for man to live in, and then died, leaving his body to become the earth. This ties in with the legend of Tiamat whose Dragon body, after her death became the Earth.

Furthermore, from China comes the fact that the Emperor Shao-Hao who lived from 2597 to 2513 B.C. seemed to introduce many orders which emphasized the number nine (Lunar Calendar?), which was previous to the time of the Great Flood, that event having taken place in the reign of Emperor Yao 2357-2255 B.C. In view of the better records of Egypt, it would seem that China was not quite correct in the chronology of her events, but their order is suggestive. It is barely possible that this battle of theologies and ideologies, this Clash-of-the-Calendars, did not take place in the Americas where it is so often and so vividly recorded. Yet if not, where did it take place? Where was this land which carried the calendar that is always suggested in Amerind

³ Herodotus.

¹ The "Terrible Two" is a Pueblo term for the "Twins."

² See "Song of the Sun."

⁴ There is also an ancient musical instrument but so old that it is almost unobtainable. I am not able to say how many pipes it has.

legends as brought by refugee peoples fleeing from some unknown catastrophe? Where was this land whose name figures in the earliest records of India, China and America. Where was Pan?

To the student of the classics the strongest connection with the old goat-god is the little instrument which he was pictured as playing. It is a strange coincidence, if coincidence it is, that this instrument is rather widely and anciently distributed in the Americas. It has apparently long ago left North America, but in the early graves of the old long-beaded population who inhabited the coast of California milleniums before any other peoples, the skeletons are usually holding this little instrument in their bony fingers up to their fleshless lips. And once more, in the ancient graves of Peru, upon the old land surface which runs out into the sea, and which has greatly sunk since the original inhabitants used it as a burial ground, the skeletons or mummies hold this little musical instrument. These same people in both localities extensively used whale-bones to arch their doorways, and apparently had deep-sea hooks, and therefore must have used ocean-going canoes. Does this suggest that the people of Pan came by sea down the coast from the North-west?

DURING the time of the Incas, the little Pans-pipes attained great glory. It became a giant instrument played by four men, sometimes ten feet in length, which was not unlike a small organ. Today in the Matto Grosso it still survives, and one can even yet persuade certain members of the tribes to play weird and curious old melodies upon their almost identical copies of the old goat-god's instrument.

The name of Pan is particularly scattered throughout Mexican territory, and is especially strong in Vera Cruz. This was the location of the second stop, according to legend, of Votan's fleet.

In North America the earliest true name for the Algonquian-speaking tribes seems to be a subject for disagreement among the oldest authorities. Father Mercier, writing of the Mississippi in 1653 speaks of these people who came over four hundred leagues by canoe to trade. He mentions the bird-like crest in which they did their hair, and we recognize the Eagle Totem of the Algonquians, though at that time, the borrowed traits from it were also used by the Iroquois and Sioux, both of whom the Algonquian assure us are really of the Serpent Totem.⁵

In this particular case, Father Mercier is describing Algonquians, who he says, call themselves "Puants" or "Puans." On page 212 of his letters, he mentions the "River of the Puans" which seems to be in Michigan, and which the editor thinks may refer to Fox River, Michigan. Winnipeg is designated as meaning "Bad-water People" or "Salt-water People," and Father Mercier is of

⁵ *The Algonkins called them "True Adders," possibly signifying that they themselves were of an amalgamated totem.*

the impression that "Puans" has a similar meaning. Undoubtedly the name "Stinkard" by which Bartram designated the conquered group of the Natchez population, and the popular Natchez tongue as distinguished from their court tongue, is only an English translation of the same name. Bartram admits that the word "Puants" or "Puans" was a common designation for certain Indians among the Natchez.

Gatschet is of the opinion that this name is but an opprobrious epithet among the French and the Natchez, which is an idea shared by Dumont. It is possible, however, that these disagreeing authorities and gentle Father Mercier, who mentions the name in good faith, may all be right. People have been known to take a name and give it a connotation for a trait that they did not like. Such is the slang expression: "Don't be scotch." Or they have been known to play upon it as a pun. A similar argument could be made out a few milleniums hence that Toulouse was not the name of a French town at all, but merely an American opprobrious epithet for the place which had taken its origin from the slang of the dough-boy of World War I.

One thing is certain, Father Mercier cannot be accused of romanticism in attempting to spread the name of a land of legendary fame in ancient India, China and America (Central America, that is), to the lands of the Mississippi Valley. Father Mercier probably never heard of Pan, and if he had, he certainly didn't connect it with the "savages" he was attempting to truthfully describe. Nor, for that matter, do other arguing authorities. Their very mispronunciation, following the French dialect, shows that they have not recognized the name of "Pan-tu" or "All-glorious Pan." That the Natchez gave them to understand that it had an insulting meaning is not to be doubted. Indians are notoriously turning the great names of an enemy tribe into an insult. That is why there is such a taboo upon mentioning a sacred name.

According to the legendary stories of the Great Votan, he sailed away from his sinking homeland in a fleet of thirty-six ships which carried not only animals but the seeds of gourds, cereals, nuts, fruits, cotton, medicines, drinks, etc., as well as the ancient library of his homeland and the priests skilled in reading same. The first stop which this fleet was supposed to have made upon American shores was subsequently named "Panuco," or "The Place where Landed the People from Pan." This stop has been suggested as Florida, by some authorities who have tried to follow the geography of that migration, and the present port of Tampa is designated as the first possible landing place, the modern name having come down through the ages from the ancient "Panuco" just as the similar name upon the Mexican Gulf coast of Tampico designates the second landing of Votan's fleet.

Yet there are other interesting possibilities. Chateaubriand tells us that the Indians (Algonkins) thought that Michigan was a sacred land. (Decoodah, by the way, says the same.) The

reason given to Chateaubriand was that here the waters made a great continental cross. From Lake Superior they flowed to the east to the Atlantic and from slightly north, they flowed to Hudson Bay and to the Polar Sea while the headwaters of the Mississippi, near by, flowed to the Gulf which they called the Southern Sea.⁶ Farther to the west, they assured him was a river which flowed directly west, emptying into the waters of the Western Ocean. Could they have meant the Columbia? This is almost a fantastic knowledge of geography to have come from the lips of a seemingly savage tribe. (Yet so is the Pawnee sky-map, a fantastic knowledge of astronomy.) How can we account for it?

POSSIBLY this is tied up with another question. How can we account for the mines under the forests of Michigan? I was once taken to the site of such a mine. A storm had uprooted a great forest giant and it had gone crashing down, tearing up the earth and cutting a great swath through the younger growth. But the thing which my old Indian friend had brought me to see was not the ancient forest whose ample girth must have held at least a thousand rings of annual growth. It was the great hole which its roots had torn in the earth. As I looked at it curiously, I suddenly saw that at which he had been silently pointing. It was the opening of a mine! With pounding veins and bulging eyes I followed him into the opening, playing my flashlight over the old shaft where the rotten beams had long since fallen and vanished—a shaft which still disclosed the pick-marks of the early miner, probably made with one of those bronze picks whose secret hardening process has long since been lost.

Were the people who dug the copper mine under the forest on Chippewa-owned reservation land, the same as those whose geographical knowledge of North America comes down to us through a few carelessly recorded phrases of Chateaubriand? Both sources were Algonkins. Pressing my Algonkin friends for an explanation, I learned the following legend—that the great horned Sea-Serpent who had been defeated by the Thunderbird, had a horn of copper. From this copper horn, it supplied the Chippewas with copper aeons ago.

Was this one of the battlegrounds of the two great totems? Did the "Sea-serpent" who "crawled out of the sunrise sea" come for copper? Was this an ancient trading and mining community of the old sea colossus? If so, it is possible that Votan did not come to a new land but to a col-

ony. Perhaps the early Dragon tried to tame the "Twins" and pushed its ancient culture far into the wilderness—possibly even across the Aleutians. Indeed, it might have succeeded had not some adversity struck it at its nerve-center in its homeland, crippling the Water-ruling Dragon and making it an easy prey for its enemies to conquer . . .

Yet if this is not the story of the Mississippi, and the word "Puan" is not a corruption and a slur upon the name of "Pan," then why do the legends of a hundred tribes, and the few remaining documents which have survived, agree concerning the final defeat of one totem by two others—a defeat which may have had its final phases in Central America? Why did Quetzalcoatl take the amalgamated totem? And why do the Algonkins who suggested the Thanksgiving festival to the white Pilgrims, insist that it was a feast which they had long celebrated in commemoration of that day long past, when a handful of their ancestors landed upon the shores of this continent after a perilous voyage at sea? Why do the Chippewas say that the city which once stood upon the site of Chicago was "Michi-Pan," meaning in their tongue "Great Pan," and that it faced the lake by the same name?

However, at the rate which these legends are dying, one wonders if today, even among the last of the "Pan-tecas" (People of Pan), a small tribe of Vera Cruz, Mexico, located near the site of Panuto, Mexico, one could still find a trace of the charming legendary fragment which gave to America a holiday. And one also wonders, as we the alien conquerors celebrate this holiday, how many of us know that the turkey, squash, pumpkin-pie, cranberry sauce, tomatoes, corn, beans and all the other "appropriate" dishes served upon that occasion probably once came over to this land in the fleet of Votan who may have brought them from stricken and legendary Pan?

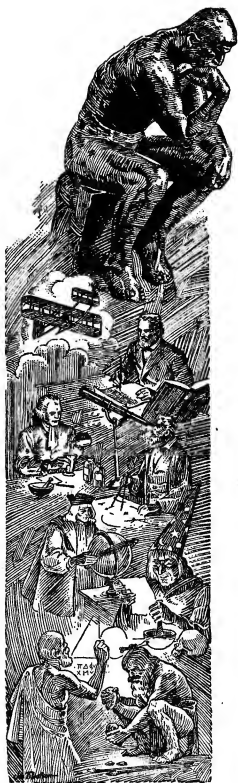
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⁶ The text of Mackenzie on this subject is almost identical.

COMING IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE

"EARTH SLAVES TO SPACE!" by Richard S. Shaver
INCREDIBLE SEQUEL TO "THE MASKED WORLD"



WHAT MAN

DOES IRON CAUSE AGE?

By FRANKLIN JOHNSON

MR. HOBART M. GIBSON'S article "Immortality Needs Your Help" in February 1946 issue of *AMAZING STORIES* is well written by a person who sincerely believes he has found the answer to the riddle of death.

This writer believes Mr. Gibson has not found the answer, but that he has done and is doing a service to mankind by talking and writing about the possibility of making man immortal. His article has prompted this writer to state certain facts and conclusions which may help Mr. Gibson to explore other avenues and to decide whether immortality is desirable even if obtainable.

Mr. Gibson, because he is brave and believes it himself, makes the flat statement "Barring accidental injury, carbon-monoxide has caused all animal death since time began." He goes on to assert that if a way were found to ventilate the colon where carbon-monoxide is now formed, its absorption into the bloodstream would not take place and the body cells and organs would not be killed and we would attain immortality.

Suppose a way were found to ventilate the colon and prevent carbon-monoxide from getting into the body and killing off the body cells, the cells then would multiply and as Dr. Carrel's experiment demonstrated each body in the course of time would cover an area equal in size to Manhattan Island. In view of this would it not appear that it is necessary to permit carbon-monoxide to enter the body and kill off cells so that the new growth may have space in which to live and function? If not, then we would also have to find a way to prevent cells from reproducing.

When animal body cells die, the body eliminates them, and the carbon-monoxide that caused their death is eliminated with them. If this were not so, the body would expand in size from year to year, just as does a tree that retains its dead cells. Furthermore, in no time at all there would be more than the fatal quantity of one per cent of carbon-monoxide in the body and this would be given as the cause of death by the physician.

Before we may gain immortality, we must prevent aging. From birth to death our bodies are continuously undergoing change. Our outward form and features change from day to day and year to year. New cells are born every day and old ones die. The body is thus renewed from day to day but in spite of this renewal we grow older and look and feel older with passing time. Apparently the new cells are prevented from accomplishing the same objectives as their

CAN IMAGINE...

If you will imagine it, perhaps someone will be inspired to do it. This department is for your ideas, no matter how "wild" they may seem; who knows, they may be the spur to some man's thinking and thereby change our destiny! Tell us your thoughts.

progenitors by some as yet undetermined material or force within the body that exerts a more powerful influence over the function of the new cells with each passing day.

Mr. Gibson says carbon-monoxide is such a force. Dr. Crile said that death was merely the end point of a progressive acid saturation. This writer has pointed out that carbon-monoxide is eliminated from the body after it has performed its function and therefore in his opinion, this could not be the responsible force. Dr. Crile could be correct, but if we could eliminate the acid he refers to, we would not prevent aging and eventual death, because acid would form again unless we also eliminated the substance that caused the body to produce the acid. To illustrate this point, let us take a pan of ordinary water and throw a rusty iron bolt into it. At the end of twenty-four hours, taste the water. It will have a distinct iron flavor. The fluid surrounding the rusty iron has become "acid" so to speak. We remove the iron-flavored water or "acid" and refill the container with pure fresh water, but instead of removing the rusty iron bolt that caused the water to turn "acid" we add a second rusty bolt. In twenty-four hours we taste the water again and find it has twice as much iron flavor as the first quantity. If we should continue this procedure, we would one day discover that in spite of our throwing off the water that had gained an iron flavor in twenty-four hours and replacing it with fresh water, we had a saturated iron solution or "acid" at the end of the next twenty-four hours.

Now we shall indicate what we believe might be the agent that caused the acid condition referred to by Dr. Crile. If we do it well enough, some scientist will find a method to eliminate or reduce it, and then we may double our natural span of life, or even prolong it three or four fold or until we find that another agent that perhaps would take three or four times as long to create



a saturated acid condition as the first one has taken over. The scientists of that day will have to find a way to eliminate or reduce that one and so on forever.

The agent we seek should be a solid element. Scientists have found by spectroscopic examination of the ashes of human organs that there are traces of copper, aluminum and silver in the adult heart; copper, aluminum and titanium in the lungs; cobalt, nickel and lead in the pancreas; copper, lead and silver in the liver; aluminum, silver and copper in the kidneys and the nearby adrenal glands; silver, tin, iron and copper in the spleen; the brain was found to be rich in tin and iron and these metals were also found in the thyroid gland in the neck, which also contains silver, copper, lead and zinc.

Of the metals or elements that enter the human body via our daily food, water and air, all at some time or other are eliminated and replenished with one exception—IRON. Once taken into the body and absorbed, iron remains and accumulates.

The average young person has less iron stored up in his or her body than the average older person. The older a person grows the more iron he stores up. Some people may absorb more iron in the same amount of time than others and these may be the ones referred to as prematurely aged. An athlete or one engaged in an occupation that causes him to "get out of breath" fre-

quently, undoubtedly accumulates iron at a faster rate than a person who rarely "gets out of breath." The reason is the more we over-exert ourselves, the larger is the quantity of oxygen we need for our lungs and other parts of the body. The more oxygen we take in, the more iron we admit, because it is the iron compound in the blood (hemoglobin) that carries the vital oxygen to every cell in the human body. The more iron we absorb in a short space of time the sooner we fill the so-called "iron storerooms," the brain and the thyroid gland in the neck, and the sooner we acquire the saturated acid condition that Dr. Crile referred to.

It is now fairly well established by medical scientists that breathing originates in a special area in the brain, the respiratory center. If this part of the brain were saturated with an acid created by an over-abundance of iron, it is conceivable that the respiratory center would not perform properly. Even if this part of the brain were not saturated by "iron acid," it could be affected by some other part of the brain that was so contaminated. We know that the respiratory center can be affected by impulses arising elsewhere in the brain due to emotions or mental state and possibly it could be affected if it failed to receive certain impulses which may have been cut off because of iron acid saturation in another part of the brain or in the thyroid gland.

In anemia there are too few blood cells (hemoglobin) to convey oxygen and yet there is an abundance of iron in the brain and the thyroid gland. How did the iron get into the brain and the thyroid gland? Only from the blood stream! Why does the blood stream fail to absorb iron in anemia and old age? Could it be that there is an iron intake regulating center in the brain and when this center or store house is filled to capacity, it is unable to send the necessary iron intake impulses to the blood vessel nerves?

While Mr. Gihson most likely will heartily disagree with this writer's theory, he probably will be glad to know that there are others, some well equipped, who are seeking a way to lengthen the span of life to eventual immortality. What is said here may start someone who is equipped to experiment along a new road. Professors R. A.

McCance and E. M. Widdowson of Cambridge University, England are the men who in 1943 or 1944 discovered that iron, once entered into the human body, does not ever come out and that in a sense we are all becoming more and more "ironized" storehouses of iron and they are continuing their investigations into the way in which iron is absorbed, used and stored up.

There are also many other scientists who are studying the function of various other minerals found in trace quantities in our bodies such as Dr. E. V. McCollum of Johns Hopkins University, Dr. David Marine, Drs. D. W. Armstrong and P. J. Brekhuis and others.

Not so long ago Alhert and Mary Lasker and Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation granted \$115,000.00 to the School of Medicine of Columbia University to conduct research into the process of growing old. "Aging is one of our most urgent medical problems—a problem which has been sadly neglected for lack of funds and for lack of assurance of long-term support" said Dean Rappleye of Columbia School of Medicine.

And now to suggest a way of reducing and keeping the quantity of iron in the body "store-rooms" under control, so that there will always be a place for the blood to discharge old used up iron and enable it to absorb new iron. Let our scientists who are working in their laboratories on the problem of how to lengthen the span of life consult with the men in charge of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station at Rutgers University, which has been making a study of the iron-eating bacteria that extracted iron from water in ages past and laid down our largest supply of iron ore at Mesabi Range.

Perhaps a way could be found to put some of these hugs into a small sieve-like container and insert the container in the brain and permit the hugs to extract the iron from the brain fluid to a predetermined degree. Suppose it were found by aid of a sensitive meter that the average person of 25 years of age had an iron content in the brain of 25 points and the average person of 50 years registered 50 then perhaps all that would be necessary to take 25 years off the 50 year old person's age, would be to extract sufficient iron to cause the meter to register 25. Who knows?



THE MUD-SKIPPER



ONE of the most remarkable of nature's freaks is the mud-skipper, or tree-climbing fish. Scientists have labeled it the *Periophthalmus*. This amazing creature spends most of its time skipping about on the mud flats in search of food or basking in the sun perched on a mangrove root. While out of the water, the large gill chambers are kept filled with air and the tail is often left hanging down in the water. As strange as it may sound, this fish breathes through the skin of the tail, more efficiently than by means of gills. It can survive for

thirty-six hours with the tail submerged but hardly half that long if only the gills are allowed to function. It has become so accustomed to a life out of the water that it is unable to live in what should be its native element for any length of time. Moreover, its bulhous, staring eyes are adjustable to vision in the air as well as in the water. A specially developed muscle enables the fish to shift the spherical lens so close to the retina as to produce a sharp image even of objects at some distance. Remarkable, but true!—Gary Lee Horton.

NEW EVIDENCE FOR ATLANTIS

By VINCENT H. GADDIS

The legend of Atlantis has lived long in the mind of Man; now there is new evidence that it is not all myth

DRY-LAND fossils dredged from the ocean floor in the Atlantic—the recent translation of an ancient Mayan manuscript—discoveries of prehistoric inhabitants on the Bay Islands—inscriptions found at Troy! Piece by piece scientists are putting together the fragments of man's mysterious antiquity, and from the shadow of age-old legends the vanished continent of Atlantis is slowly assuming the form of reality.

In the summer of 1934 the crew of the Woods Hole Institute research ship was dredging for marine fossils off Cape Cod. Suddenly the dripping huckets started bringing up certain dry-land fossils from the bottom of the sea. The nature of the fossilized creatures and their location could mean but one conclusion: that the ocean floor had sunk recently and suddenly.

More discoveries followed. The Woods Hole expedition continued dredging far out into the Atlantic. Evidence was found that within very recent geological times a vast land area had sunk as much as 8,000 feet. It could well have occurred within the memory of prehistoric man.

Under the leadership of Dr. H. C. Stetson, annual studies continued, and shortly before the war another report was issued. The scientists announced that they were puzzled by the speed with which great canyons now at the bottom of the sea must have been formed. These valleys were too deep, too young, and too close to what is now dry land to have been formed by erosion. Writing in the *Bulletin of the Geological Society of America*, Dr. Stetson declared: "Such a rise and fall of sea level in so short a time . . . approaches the catastrophic."

During this pre-war period other discoveries were being made. A. M. Bolio, the famous Mexican scholar and philologist, completed his translation of part of the ancient Mayan manuscript known as the *Book of Chilam Balam* from Chumayel, one of the few Mayan writings to escape destruction in 1562. A passage in this work suggests the birth of Mayan culture in Central America as the aftermath to the destruction of Atlantis. It reads as follows:

"The earth began to waken. And a fiery rain fell, and ashes fell, and rocks and trees fell down. And their Great Serpent was ravished from the

heavens. And then, in one watery blow, came the waters . . . the sky fell down and the dry land sank. And in a moment the great annihilation was finished. And the Great Mother Seiha rose amidst recollections of the destruction of the earth."

This translation agrees with similar accounts of a great continental destruction found in the Mayan *Troano* Manuscript, now in the British Museum, the *Codex Cortesianus*, the Lhasa Record, the *Ramayana*, Hindu records translated by the Asiatic Society of India, and other ancient records and writings.

Six centuries before the birth of Christ Egyptian priests told the Greek philosopher, Solon, that Atlantis had been a continent and an empire existing beyond the Pillars of Hercules (Straits of Gibraltar). It had been rich in gold and harvests, and easily reached from Europe. Plato, in his famous account, tells us that Atlantean soldiers had attacked the peoples east of the Mediterranean Sea: The invaders had been driven back; earthquakes and floods destroyed the continent shortly after.

Dr. Henry Schliemann, the famous archeologist who turned myth into startling reality by his discovery of the ruins of Troy, was convinced that Atlantis once existed. In the St. Petersburg Museum he found a papyrus roll, one of the oldest known, which was written in the reign of Pharaoh Sent of the Second Dynasty (4100 B. C.). The inscription states that the pharaoh sent out an expedition to the west in search of traces of Atlantis from whence, 3350 years previously, the ancestors of the Egyptian arrived carrying with them all of the wisdom of their native land. After a search of five years the expedition returned with the report that their original motherland had vanished completely.

In this same museum Dr. Schliemann found another papyrus, written by the Egyptian priest-historian, Manetho, which gives a reference to a period of 13,900 years as the reign of the Sages (Kings) of Atlantis. This inscription implies that the beginning of Egyptian history was at the height of the civilization of Atlantis. It is well-known that the culture of Egypt seems to have no root. The Egyptian and Assyrian solar and lunar calendars coincide, and this agreement began about

11,542 B. C. If Egypt and Assyria were colonized from Atlantis, this would account for the agreement and perhaps mark the date of the continent's destruction.

Dr. Schliemann made other astonishing discoveries. Among the treasures of Priam that he uncovered at Troy was an "owl vase" and a "hird sphinx" bearing Phoenician hieroglyphics reading: "From the King Chronos of Atlantis." Later Dr. Schliemann found this peculiar owl vase duplicated in a collection of objects from Tiahuanaco, South America, in the Louvre at Paris. Commenting on this, the archeologist wrote: "It is beyond the range of coincidence for two articles in two widely separated areas as South America and Troy to make two vases of the same shape, the same size, and with curious owl's heads arranged in just the same way."

On the Lion Gate at Maycarne, Crete, Dr. Schliemann translated an inscription which told of the coming of the first Egyptians from Atlantis. This supports a similar statement made in the *Troano* Manuscript, an ancient Mayan writing. A number of ancient writers in addition to Plato refer to Atlantis, and Dr. Schliemann was certain that Atlantis would emerge from the mists of the past, just as the city of Homer arose from the forgotten mound at Hissarlik.

PERHAPS the most remarkable investigation in recent years indicating the former existence of Atlantis was that undertaken by F. A. Mitchell-Hedges. The British explorer believes that the universal flood legends are dim memories of the continent destruction. After hacking through miles of sweltering jungle and with the results of twenty-one excavations on five Caribbean islands before him, Mitchell-Hedges has reached three conclusions: first, that at some remote time a great land area stretching eastward from Central America sank and was engulfed by the sea; second, that during this gigantic geological readjustment, a portion of what had been sea-bed was heaved upward to become land within the area we now know as Central America; and third, that a cultured race of men was destroyed by this holocaust.

The excavations were made during the year 1934 on the Bay Islands, off the coast of Honduras. Geological evidence of a great upheaval abounds on these islands and on the nearby mainland. In Nicaragua there is an inland fresh water lake in which are living saft water sharks, and Mitchell-Hedges believes that these fish were trapped when the sea-bed arose to form part of Central America. The nature of the lava flows reveal that the islands were once part of a larger body of land extending eastward.

Thousands of stone, metal and jadeite objects were found displaying a different culture from that of the Mayan or Inca, although similarities can be traced. Regarding this fact, the British Museum, in an official statement, said that "this is an early culture from which the early forms of culture were

diffused over the Central and South Americas." It is difficult to estimate the antiquity of this civilization. Mitchell-Hedges believes it flourished not later than 15,000 B. C. It existed long before the beginnings of Egypt, long before the day of the Queens of Ur, whose vanity cases and toilet sets have startled us.

A number of caves containing artifacts of prehistoric man were found on the island of Helene. Painted vases and figurines display advanced artistic ability; flute-like musical instruments prove that the people were musically cultured. Not a single object had its counterpart among Maya, Aztec or Toltec remains. Although domestic animals were unknown to the Mayans, Mitchell-Hedges found models of bulls, cows and sheep. According to legend the hull was held sacred on Atlantis.

Semi-circles of monolithic stones, similar to the Druid formations in England, were found on the island of Bonaca, and this island was probably the site of a religious center. The explorer refers to the amazing knowledge of medicine and poisons possessed by the South American Indians as evidence that knowledge from Atlantis still survives. The Mayan calendar was more accurate than our own.

In a letter to Mitchell-Hedges following his discoveries, Dr. George C. Heye, Director of the Heye Foundation of the Museum of the American Indian, New York City, wrote: "Your own observations, and the United States Government surveys in Nicaragua, prove conclusively that at some remote period a tremendous earth movement of cataclysmic force must have taken place in that part of the world . . . and that your excavations have actually unearthed the cultural artifacts of a prehistoric people that existed prior to the great earth movement. . . . Your discoveries open up an entirely new vista in regard to the ancient civilizations of the American continent."

DRUID formations of England duplicated in America! The step-pyramids of Egypt duplicated in America! Universal myths of a deluge! In American Indian languages there are over a hundred words that are similar to words of the same meaning in the Arabic and Greek languages. The myths of Grecian history are found repeated in Indian and Mayan traditions.

Like the Egyptians, the Mayans have no cultural root. Long before the pyramids of the Nile Valley were built, they arrived in Yucatan with a high degree of civilization. Their existence on the American continent was not an advance, but a decline of culture. Their oldest buildings are their finest. They carved in jade and in crystal. To do this today requires the hardest of vanadium steel, but we have not found what tools they used. They possessed a vast knowledge of mathematics and astronomy. Although their culture was developed elsewhere, there is no trail of ruins leading across the continent from any direction.

The belief that they came from the sea is sup-

ported by their myths and the fact that they settled on the eastern seaboard. There were few real Mayans, as their caste system shows. They were a dying race, and native legend says they perished through some form of birth control. In 540 A. D. they were succeeded by the Toltecs.

Is it the loss of Atlantis that is pictured with scenes of vast destruction in the post-Mayan book *Dresden Codex*? Is it the death of the Motherland that is described with ideographs on the time-glyph at the Palace of Tikal with the date 12,042 B. C.? Philological evidence is abundant when the Mayan, Arabic and Greek languages are compared. The Grecian myth of Atlas is reproduced in the ruins of Palenque, and a cast of this carving is on view at the American Museum of Natural History. How did this story get to America? It seems likely that this myth came from Atlantis and is a symbol of the Azores. The daughter of Atlas was the goddess Maia. That was the original name of the Mayas. If they came from Atlantis, they were the "children of Atlas."

Oceanographic surveys reveal that there is a great plateau or elevation beneath the Atlantic. It is known as the Dolphin Ridge, and extends from a point off the coast of Ireland south to the coast line of South America near French Guiana, embracing the Azores. The general level

of this plateau is 9,000 feet above that of the ocean bed proper, the islands connected with it being the peaks of sunken mountains.

Specimens of lava recently brought up from this plateau at a point north of the Azores show evidence of having congealed under atmospheric conditions while above the surface of the water at a recent date. It is known that lava exposed to sea water will disintegrate to a known extent in about 15,000 years. Dr. Frederick Strong, the geologist, writes: "The inference is obvious—the eruption which ejected the lava must have occurred above the surface of the ocean, and therefore, what is now the bed of the Atlantic Ocean must have been above sea level less than 15,000 years ago."

Vast earth disturbances in this area are still taking place. The Scandinavian islands have risen from 200 to 600 feet within the last five thousand years. A new island recently appeared in Erin Bay, Trinidad, in the British West Indies. In fact it has been reported that geological surveys indicate that a new continental land mass is slowly rising under the waves of mid-Atlantic almost from pole to pole.

Perhaps Atlantis is being reborn. Perhaps the continent of man's antiquity will live again in a future era.



ANIMAL HYPNOTISM



FANTASY has its place in the animal world as well as in Man's imagination. The Rip Van Winkle that Washington Irving put to sleep for twenty years in his famous story has his counterpart in all those creatures which hibernate the winter through, coming back to active life in the spring. Some zoologists have labeled the animal's winter state a "coma," while others have compared it to animal hypnosis. Extremes in weather are not the only means of inducing hypnosis in an animal, however. When a cobra is deftly seized behind the head and subjected to a little mild constraint, it becomes completely hypnotized. Fresh-water crayfish react that way when they are prevented from moving. Rabbits, mice, guinea pigs, bats, cats, and even dogs may be hypnotized by fastening them securely to a board and turning it quickly upside-down.

Professor E. Mangold has conducted many experiments on the subject of hypnosis and has found human and animal reactions to be quite similar. True hypnosis in man and animals implies a sleep-like state, an inhibition of locomotion, an inability to "right" the body when put into some abnormal position, and a decrease in sensitiveness to touch and to pain. It has been found that operations may be performed while the patient is in a hypnotic state without having him react to the pain. Mangold has classified the types of hypnosis, putting experimental hypnosis—that induced by suggestion, at the top of

the list. Man and some of the higher animals, such as horses, can be induced into insensibility in this manner. Hypnosis which is mechanically induced by constraining movement, rubbing, or holding upside down, falls into the second category and can be used on many birds and mammals. Crayfishes, snakes, lizards, amphibians, and some insects belong to this group. Natural hypnosis is one of the protective tricks or talents that Nature has provided to keep certain species alive in this world of danger. The phenomenon may be exhibited by many of the lower animals; they stop abruptly at any sudden change in the routine of their sensory stimulation. Simple animals seem to be disturbed when they pass suddenly from darkness into light, or from water to dry ground, or when they touch something strange to them. They stop short, activity is switched off, and they appear to be dead. This is one form of animal hypnosis.

Some curious facts about the hypnosis of man and animals has shown that when the effect is not a very strong one, the hypnotized person may find himself powerless to move but partly aware of what is going on around him. Similarly it has been found that if some grains of corn are dropped down in front of the eyes of a hen in a hypnotic state, she sometimes tries to peck at them, and may awaken in an attempt to swallow. Though the hen may appear completely paralyzed, she apparently has some mental powers still in use.—H. R. Stanton.

WILL MANKIND ALLOW HIS LIFE TO EXPAND?

By
JOHN McCABE MOORE

THE thymus, which atrophies after childhood until only traces are to be found, has been a nuisance phenomenon to medical science. It is a body of *specialized* lymphatic structure fulfilling the following unrecognized functions:

1) Furnishing the body with materials from which to build connective tissue (the binding tissue of parts and organs). The connective tissue is the filtration system through which nutrients, enzymes and hormones enter the individual cells. When this tissue operates fully, a balance is maintained. When the thymus gland is normal the connective tissues as well as other tissues are constantly cleared of organic and inorganic sediments, by substances (one of particularly great importance) which are manufactured there.

2) Manufacturing substances to maintain blood pressure at a point below the excretory pressure of the individual cell. As long as this condition is maintained properly two normal functions of the cell are possible. First it is enabled to dispose of metabolism end-point products with facility (these substances are poisonous to the cell when retained). Second it is able to continue fission, thus extending its own life by its *own* power of propagation, simultaneously extending and enlarging the body organism as a whole, as is normal. The thymus gland substance, when injected into the body may lower blood pressure sufficiently to produce death. It has therefore been regarded as too dangerous for medical experimentation.

3) Manufacturing substances for the activation of the pituitary growth hormone. These substances are interlaced in function with those responsible for holding the line of blood pressure. The pituitary is entrusted with the control of the blood-pressure-raising substances secreted by other endocrine glands (the genitals, the thyroid, the adrenals). However, only the thymus can empower the pituitary to secrete its growth hormone in quantities which are sufficient to permit the body as a whole to continue growth, which is a normal function.

4) The production of substance indispensable to the processes of specialized cell function throughout the body. Without this substance in sufficient amounts (traces of the thymus "normally" endure) cell nutrition is impaired, the special cells fail in the production of hormones et al, the "tone" of the entire organism abates, emergency high blood pressure conditions are set up, and the body finally

fails entirely either slowly or dramatically (apoplexy, heart failure, Addison's disease, cancer, and other deeply-grounded conditions).

5) The maintenance of anti-carcinogenic (against the beginning of cancer) conditions in the body fall, in large part on the thymus. The author had the pleasure of predicting (from chemical knowledge only) that cancer of the thymus would probably be almost non-existent. Consider that by March, 1945, medical literature contained only 69 reported cases of thymoma. At least until that time medical science had not taken any interest in the unbelievable rarity of the disease in the case of the thymus. It is fervently hoped that such interest will shortly begin.

Thymus extract is not considered by the writer to be the answer to the improper function of that organ. In the first place the use of whole endocrines and the use of endocrine extractives or synthetic hormones may very well depress or over-stimulate the function of the glands of their normal origin. Secondly, disfunction of the thymus is of many types. The most important types are 1) the complete failure of the thymus to manufacture one or another of the factors it should. The rarest of this type of thymus failure is the condition wherein cancer of the gland occurs; and 2) the production of chemically unfinished substance in large amounts.

The second of the types of thymus abnormality mentioned above results in an enlarged lymphatic system, especially the nodes, a large spleen and a small heart. The small heart is owing to low blood pressure. There is no need for a powerful pump. The spleen is enlarged to assist in rapid development of red corpuscles, which are easily and rapidly destroyed by the abnormal chemical balance. In fact, when the abnormal factor is produced beyond the ability of the blood factories to keep up with the demand for red corpuscles cyanosis attacks often occur (blueness from lack of tissue oxygenation). Linked to this phenomenon is the circumstance that a body subject to this chemical condition is unable to resist infection—long and acute infections. Emotional instability and sudden, unexpected death are commonplace in this type of affliction.

Dr. Bogomolets of Russia announced in 1941 that he believed his "youth serum" to be finished. For more than a quarter of a century, with numerous assistants, he ran down the connective tissue facts. Finally he ascertained that by the

use of reticulo-endothelial cells from the spleen and bone marrow (these cells must be from the species of mammal to be treated) a rejuvenation of the entire organism could be affected. What he succeeded in doing was clearing the detritus out of the connective tissues, so that they and other body cells could once more be fed, and thus were rebuilt to function as healthy cells should. No capacity for the formation of new tissues in the sense of growth of the organism as a whole was encountered. Also the reticulo-endothelial cells for man must be taken from an individual of youth and health dead from other causes than disease, and the cells must be employed by from six to ten hours after death occurs.

WE must either move forwards or backwards as individuals and as a race. This is true in regard to physique and mentality both. The hope for unlimited time in which to accomplish our purposes on earth can only be guaranteed by continuous physico-chemical development of mind and body. The growth attribute is very nearly indispensable to a "potential immortality" if it is to be reasonably meaningful.

Along this sector (where the problem of stimulation of actual growth is being attacked) another Russian savant discovered (quite by accident in routine biochemical experimentation) a substance derived from egg albumin and sulfuric acid, which tremendously stimulates growth, both plant and animal, in the cases of both young and mature beings.

In sunny California an A.M.A. member succeeded in isolating the growth hormone of the pituitary gland. This took place well over a year ago, but it is safe to say that the employment of this factor will not become recognized in medical practice for ten years or more. Bootleg before the full acceptance of the use of the growth principle will enable the people with the price to circumvent the limitations of being undersized. Its use in the prevention of dwarfism will naturally come first. Medical science will take a long time to decide upon the proper place for the introduction of the growth factor into the human body, but from the evidence which Dr. Bogomelets turned up the stimulation of bone marrow and spleen tissue cells might be finally decided upon. Direct introduction to the blood stream, particularly in cases of cardio-vascular and cancer troubles

might have very disastrous results.

So while Dr. So-and-So of such-and-such takes his line of attack, without the consideration of the results obtained by Dr. This-and-That of elsewhere, the race treads water in a miasma of fear and despond. Billions of dollars for two atomic bombs, hundreds of billions for the maintenance of the profit system, trillions for the promulgation of future war, and less than we spend against the grasshopper for fighting cancer. Any one of us may belong to the twenty-five per cent of the race who are marked for death from cancer. (Pardon the digression.)

If another twenty-five years sees the staving-off of old age becoming real, and the misanthropes of the terrible endocrine disturbances relieved of their crosses, perhaps surgery will be ready to attack the problem of the transplantation of specialized cells to replace those which are day-by-day casualties to "thunder-bolt" medication with poisonous metals and dangerous aromatic compounds. This is going to become one of the major problems of medicine within the next ten years! That it has already become a tremendous stumbling-block, though unrecognized, is indicated by the fact that since 1910 (Paul Ehrlich's neo-salvarsan, the first of the poisonous aromatic synthetics was in employment by that time, and an old physician noted in 1928 that in his cancer files ninety per cent of cancer cases had had long-standing treatment with one or another of the heavy-metal-aromatic compounds used against syphilis, the death rate from cancer has increased, not slowly and inexorably, but by enormous leaps and bounds. And for your private files, there is still no cure for syphilis. Science is due for a lot of self-examination, and it must be prepared to admit its fundamental mistakes. It must seek its magical chemical bullets against disease, not from the unnatural synthetics of the test-tube, but from the substances built by the living cell. Even these, such as penicillin and gramicidin, are far from the harmless substances they originally seemed, but at least they are built in more or less conformity to the laws of life.

So, as we strive for that "abundance of life" which we still hope is our heritage, there is backtracking to be done, many questions to be put, and tremendous issues to be decided before mankind may enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Our race is fully as sickly as our civilization.

★ NATURE SETS A TRAP ★

THE fly's worst plant enemy is the innocent looking Venus Fly-trap. Like a steel trap, it snaps its pronged leaves around unwary insects. The leaves are in rosette formation and have broad stems. Each death-dealing leaf ends in two lobes that are hinged at the midrib; each lobe has sharp spines along its margin, and its upper surface is covered with glands secreting a purplish juice. Among these

glands are three sensitive bristles, set in a triangle. The moment an insect touches a bristle, the leaf lobes close up suddenly around it and the spines along the edges interlock to hold the prisoner fast. The purple digestive juice absorbs all the nitrogenous matter in the hapless victim over a period of several days. The same leaf is rarely able to digest more than two or three flies before it dies.—Pete Bogg.

PUZZLES

FROM EARTH'S PAST

By
VINCENT H. GADDIS

WHO were the Old Ones, the Lords of the Flame, the Manu, the Greek Titans who fought with thunderbolts, the giants, the angels and "sons of God" of remote antiquity? What mighty civilizations, vanished into dim millenniums of earth's hoary history, have flourished and faded in the archaic ages before the dawn of modern man's brief recorded era?

All over the earth for many years mysterious relics have been found—footprints in coal, the forts of Brittany seared by blasts of flame, the world-wide cup marks, the Dorchester hell found embedded in solid rock, Chinese seals in Ireland, and objects in Indian mounds bearing the marks of machinery. The problems presented by these discoveries are black with mystery, but they all indicate either a startling and unsuspected antiquity for man or the existence of intelligent and cultured beings upon the earth before man attained a cultured state.

About a year ago press dispatches reported that a diamond field digger near Johannesburg, South Africa, had unearthed a fossilized sandal "conceivably a million years old." It bore the imprint of five toes, was almost fourteen inches long, seven inches wide at the maximum, with a sole two inches thick.

More startling, however, is the puzzle presented by the giant biped who roamed America in the coal age, leaving behind human-like footprints in stone to astonish historical geologists. Man's appearance on this planet is set at a million years ago, but these prints, found in both coal and sandstone, are estimated to be 250 million years old. The only differences between these fossil prints and human prints are a small-sized big toe and the smallest toe projecting at a sharp angle.

A series of twelve of these prints were discovered twelve miles southeast of Berea, Ky., by Dr. Wilbur G. Burroughs, professor of geology at Berea College, recently. Given the name *Phenanthropus Mirabilis* (marvelously human-looking), the mysterious being of the late coal age undoubtedly walked like a man, leaving no trace of front feet, a tail, or fossil hones. The largest animals known to have existed in the coal age were amphibians, related to frogs and salamanders, and they were of a relatively small size.

The theory that the marks might be Indian carvings has been disproved. Studies revealed that the arrangement of the sand grains on the

bottom of the prints were much more closely packed than those in the slopes, and those in the slopes were more closely packed than those in the rock an inch from the prints or at any other point. These findings were checked by a number of scientists and all agreed that the imprints were made when the sand was soft and wet.

Dr. Charles W. Gilmore, of the Smithsonian Institution, has announced that the Berea prints are not unique. Similar prints were found on a rock outcropping near Festus, Mo., thirty miles from St. Louis, several years ago. The rock was late coal age sandstone. Several discoveries of "human" footprints in Pennsylvania coal mines have been reported. Dr. Gilmore searched records of the U. S. National Museum and found reports of human-like prints in stone made by Henry Schoolcraft, noted early American scientist, and Senator Thomas H. Benton, in 1822. These prints were found along the Missouri bank of the Mississippi River at various points including the waterfront at St. Louis where they had long been known to the original French settlers of the city.

These prints average nine and one-half inches in length and six inches wide. Additional information, together with photographs of the Berea prints, will be found by the interested reader in *Science News Letter* (Oct. 29, 1938 and Dec. 10, 1938) and in *Science* (12-9-38).

One other state—Nevada—has reported the discovery of these prints in sandstone. According to the *American Journal of Science* (3-26-1939), large, well-defined prints were found in a rock bed near Carson. The photograph of a foot mark of an ancient man found in the upper clay of a coal seam at Fisher's Range, near Lovelock, Nev., will be found in *The Children of Mu*, by James Churchward.

MANY evidences of world-wide migrations, relations and contacts between highly-developed prehistoric cultures exist. Sanscrit maps have been found in India showing the western coast of Europe, England and Ireland. Words, customs, and monuments have been duplicated in Europe, Asia, Africa and America.

There are the Chinese seals (inscribed stamps for making impressions) of Ireland. They are all similar, a cube with an animal seated upon it, and the inscriptions upon them are said to be of an ancient type of Chinese characters. No other

ancient Chinese objects, however, have been found in Ireland. The seals were all found at a great distance apart and, with one exception, only in Ireland. About sixty had been found in 1852. No archaeological find in Ireland "is enveloped in greater mystery" (*Chamber's Journal*, 16-364). Dr. Frazer, of the Royal Irish Academy, wrote that they "appear to have been sown broadcast over the country in some strange way that I cannot offer solution of." Several were found in the beds of rivers.

The famous "cup marks," strings of cup-like impressions in rocks and on cliffs, present another mystery. Interesting are the observations of Rivett-Carnac, of the Royal Asiatic Society, that the Braille system is an inverted arrangement of cup marks, and that these marks resemble the Morse code. They are so alike that we must assign one origin to them, but this origin was worldwide in its scope. They are found almost everywhere. Large numbers are found in India, China, Italy, and Spain, and they occur on rocks and cliffs in America, Great Britain, France, Palestine, Circassia and Algeria. Some of these marks have rings around them, others have semi-circles, and they are usually in row formation.

Near Ratho, Scotland, upon the "Witch's Stone," there are a number of these marks, and it is locally explained that they are dog tracks. In Inverness-shire they are called "fairies' footprints." In Norway they are said to be horses' hoofmarks. A mythical cow is believed to have marked the rocks of Clare, Ireland. There can be little doubt that these marks are an archaic form of inscription, and their wide distribution baffles modern archaeology.

Then there are the mysterious vitrified forts surrounding England, but not in England. They are found in Scotland, Ireland, Brittany and Bohemia—a series of forts with stones melted and turned into glass, their walls vitrified in streaks, "as if special blasts had struck, or played, upon them."

All the usual explanations fail. The use of fire in cementing the stones? Seldom, even in houses that burn to the ground, are stones vitrified by flames. Lightning? There are remains of prehistoric forts all over the world, but only this special group of structures are vitrified. Some of them were on hill-tops, others were not, but all appear as if swept by a powerful ray that could melt stone. Have we here the mute evidence of an ancient battle with incredible weapons?

AMERICA appears to have played a large role in this confusing and astonishing prehistoric drama. We can now be sure that man was in America before the great ice age. Dr. Walter Hough, of the Smithsonian Institution, in his studies of the petrified forests of Arizona, has found the remains of four distinct peoples in the west. Prof. R. W. Gilder, of Omaha, Neb., has discovered that the familiar buffalo wallows of the west are actually the entrances to ruins of under-

ground dwellings built before the glacial period.

Several years ago an excavation was being made at Blue Lick Springs, Ky., and at a distance of twelve feet below the surface the bones of a mastodon were found. Below the bones was a stratum of gravel, and underneath the gravel a stone pavement formed of quarried slabs carefully cut and dressed was revealed. It is obvious that this pavement was laid long before the glacial gravel buried it.

At Fossil Lake, Ore., arrow and spear beads have been found mixed with the bones of Pleistocene mastodons, and Prof. E. L. Hewitt, of the Las Vegas University, has reported finding the remains of mastodons and saber-tooth tigers in the homes of ancient peoples in the west. These utensils were made of live (not fossil) ivory. Additional evidence of this nature, including linguistic data, will be found in the *American Anthropologist* (29-2-262) in an article written by Dr. Piny Goddard.

Readers of the books by James Churchward know of his evidences for America's amazing antiquity—the Andean canal into the Amazon basin, Niven's buried cities of Mexico, the lost empires of Central and South America. But just how long has man been in America?

A startling discovery made several years ago by the Doheny Scientific Expedition in Arizona indicates an antiquity so remote as to be incredible. In the Hava Supai Canyon, a branch of the Grand Canyon, the scientists found some drawings and carvings on the rock cliffs that may possibly be 12,000 years old. Depicted among the primitive art figures was a mastodon striking a man with his trunk. But nearby was a picture of the most terrible carnivorous reptile that ever lived, the Tyrannosaurus, a dinosaur of the late Cretaceous Period that is believed to have become extinct millions of years before man appeared upon the earth.

A century ago the geologist Cuvier believed that this reptile had four legs, and it is only within the last fifty years that it has become known that it walked upright on two legs. Nevertheless, its correct appearance was drawn thousands of years ago by primitive man in America. In addition the Hopi Indians have legends of great monsters that lived long ago and were finally turned into stone. Is it possible that a few of these great beasts of the dim geological past survived up to a period preceding the last glacial epoch?

AGAINST this background of hoary antiquity many strange objects have been found in America. These objects suggest two possibilities: either a cultured, civilized society of intelligent beings existed before the coming of primitive man to America, or the early American had occasional contacts with a more highly-developed culture that existed elsewhere.

Early in June, 1851, near Dorchester, Mass., workmen, while blasting, found a bell-shaped vessel in a bed of solid rock. It was made of an

unknown metal bearing floral designs inlaid with silver. Without doubt, it was the product of an expert workman (*Scientific American*, 7-298).

Some years ago a Mr. J. H. Hooper, of Bradley County, Tenn., found a strange stone in a woods on his farm. He dug and discovered a long wall covered with alphabetic characters. "Some 872 characters have been examined, many of them duplicates, and a few imitations of animal forms, the moon, and other objects. Accidental imitations of Oriental alphabets are numerous." But the startling factor was that these letters had been hidden or protected under a layer of cement. For some unknown reason apparently an important message was being preserved. But for whom? And what was the nature of this message?

In 1888 the Rev. Cass opened some mounds near Davenport, Iowa, and found several stone tablets. The word "TFTOWNS" was clearly visible on one of them. Another large tablet was found "with Roman numerals and Arabic." Charles Harrison, president of the American Antiquarian Society, started digging and discovered more of the stones. They were found with "characters . . . that resemble ancient alphabets, either Phoenician or Hebrew. General circumstances make it difficult to explain the presence of these tablets." In the reports a reference is made to the discovery of a brass plate near Mendon, Ill., which is said to have had similar characters. These tablets were certainly not the work of American aborigines.

A large Indian mound at Grave Creek, W. Va., was opened in 1838 by the owner, A. B. Tomlinson, and in the presence of witnesses he found a small, flat, oval disk bearing alphabetic characters. One of the most heated discussions in the history of American archaeology followed, but the stone was pronounced genuine by the Congress of Archaeologists at Nancy, France, in 1875. Later, in 1859, near Pemberton, N. J., an inscribed ax with characters similar to those on the Grave Creek stone was plowed up. This discovery was reported by Dr. John Evans to the American Ethnological Society.

Two silver highly-ornamented and skillfully made crosses were found in a mound in Georgia in 1881. They were not crucifixes, all arms being of equal length. Upon one of them was an inscription or word having no meaning in any known terrestrial language.

In connection with the inscribed stones found in American mounds, we might refer to the lettered stones of Europe, described as "one of the darkest problems of prehistoric times" by Prof. Sollas (*Ancient Hunters*). They were probably carried as curiosities or ornaments to caves by early man, being found by them elsewhere. The stones are flat, oval, about two inches wide, with characters painted on them and marked with red and black lines. Some of these characters are very complex and similar to capital letters in the Roman alphabet. One was found with the letters "FEI" distinctly upon it.

THE mystery of the mounds deepens. Dr. S. P. Hildreth has reported the discovery of a belt and sword scabbard bearing ornaments of copper plated (not overlaid) with silver in a mound near Marietta, Ohio. Experts of the American Antiquarian Society have confirmed the fact that the two metals were united by heat, the ornaments being fastened to the leather with silver rivets.

Luhbeck and Foster, American archaeologists, have listed a number of objects made of casted metal, plainly showing the marks of the mould upon them, in their works. Beads of shell have been found showing the circular striate produced by turning in a lathe. Other objects have been found bearing the marks of saws. See *Atlantis*, by Ignatius Donnelly.

The discovery of a startling stone tube in a mound near Chillicothe, Ohio, has been reported by Prof. Squier. It is made of slate. In size it is thirteen inches long by one and one-tenth inches in diameter; one end swells slightly, and the other terminates in a flattened, triangular mouth-piece carved with mathematical precision. The tube is drilled throughout its length, the bore being seven-tenths of an inch in diameter at the cylindrical end, retaining that calibre until it reaches the mouth-piece, then contracting gradually to one-tenth of an inch. At the point of contraction the circular marks made by a drill in boring are distinctly in evidence.

A number of coins have been found in Indian mounds and far underground. In 1913 a coin found in an Illinois mound was sent to Dr. Emerson, of the Chicago Art Institute, and he expressed his opinion that it was "of the rare mintage of Domitianus, Emperor in Egypt." But Dr. Emerson had no idea how it had found its way to an American Indian mound.

In July, 1871, Jacob Moffit, of Chillicothe, Ill., while boring at a depth of 120 feet, found a coin. It was uniform in thickness and there were other tokens of the machine shop. Inscriptions on it were said to be "somewhere between Arabic and Phoenician, without being either." Prof. Winchell, in his book *Sparks from a Geologist's Hammer*, says that the designs on this coin appear to have been etched with an acid.

A bronze coin, found on a farm in Cass County, Ill., and sent to Prof. F. F. Hilder, was identified as of the period of Antiochus IV, with an inscription in ancient Greek. Similar coins have been found in Virginia and Connecticut. These identifications are often questioned by other authorities, and these coins may not belong to the historical period of history at all. For additional information on these reports, see *The Books of Charles Fort*.

ALONG the shores and on the islands of Lake Superior extensive copper mining operations were carried on by some unknown people in remote antiquity. At Isle Royale the works reached a depth of sixty feet with underground drains provided. At one point the excavations extended in

a continuous line for two miles, and great intelligence was shown in following up the richest veins. The amount of copper removed by these mysterious prehistoric workers is tremendous, and the work doubtless covered a great period of time.

But, according to the *American Antiquarian* (25-258), no evidence that the region was ever inhabited by permanent dwellers has been found. There are no remains of villages or homes. There are no remains of the dead, and no mounds are found near the mines. The Indians have no traditions relating to the excavations. Apparently the miners came from a distance and carried their dead back with them. Henry Gillman, in a report to the Smithsonian Institution, has suggested that the curious so-called "garden beds" of Michigan were the fields from which the workers obtained their supplies of food.

An iron instrument "considered to be modern" was found in a lump of coal, seven feet below the surface, in a mine in Scotland. There was no sign of boring around the lump, and the coal had completely closed around the relic. A piece of metal, now in the Salsburg Museum, was found in a Tertiary coal deposit in Austria in 1885. It is cube-shaped, with a deep incision around it, and virtually a steel object. Puzzled scientists have suggested that it might be a meteorite that was shaped into a geometric construction by man after its fall. Its appearance in coal formed ages ago only adds to the mystery.

An ancient copper seal was found in chalk near Bredenstone, England, at a depth of six feet from the surface. The design on it is said to be of a monk kneeling before a Virgin and Child. Workmen, while quarrying rock, discovered a gold thread embedded in stone at a depth of eight feet, according to a report found in the *London Times* by the late Charles Fort. Fortean records contain two reports of nails being found in solid rock. One was reported by Sir David Brewster in England in 1845; the other was found in a piece of California quartz in 1851.

In 1829, at a quarry near Philadelphia, blocks of marble were being cut into slabs. These blocks were from a depth of eighty feet. Suddenly an indentation, about one and one-half inches high, was revealed on one of the slabs. The letters IU were distinctly visible—the corners of the U being at right angles and not curved. If these letters were made by intelligent beings, it happened a long time ago.

According to *Popular Science Monthly*, a fossil tooth was discovered in a coal mine near Billings, Montana, in 1928, in deposits at least a million years old. Dentists declared that the tooth had been the second molar of a human being.

Legends, myths and age-old accounts tell of the "Old Ones," a race of beings who either preceded man on the earth or lived contemporaneously with him in his early days. We are not referring

to the Atlanteans or the Lemurians as such, but rather to a special superior race of beings who apparently came to the earth from elsewhere.

IN OCCULT literature we read of the Manas, teachers and guides to early man, who came from other planets and are supposed to have given earth wheat—a plant evolved originally on another world; and we read of the Lords of the Flame who came from Venus in great ships to one of man's first cities along the shore of the Gohi Sea, now a desert.

There is the Greek legend of the Titans, a giant race, and of the great war in which thunderbolts were used, weapons fashioned by the Kyklopes. The Titans, according to the story, controlled an empire which included what is now Greece, Crete, Spain, Syria and North Africa. They are supposed to have been Atlanteans. In a rebellion against Zeus, the supreme ruler, they were finally defeated after a ten years' war by Saturn.

In the final battle which was fought near Tartessus, the Titans having retreated into Spain, thunderbolts were brought into action. Murray's *Manual of Mythology* describes the end as follows: "Old Chaos thought his hour had come as from a continuous blaze of thunderbolts the earth took fire, and the waters seethed in the sea. The rebels were partly slain or consumed, and partly buried into deep chasms, with rocks and hills reeling after them." Zeus, it might be mentioned, was known as "the thunderer," and was represented as armed with thunderbolts. Consider, in this connection, the vitrified forts.

The first four verses of the sixth chapter of Genesis tell of "Sons of God" who formed alliances with the "daughters of men," these unions producing giants—"mighty men which were of old, men of renown." The Bible's fallen angels have long presented a profound theological mystery.

A number of scholars, however, now believe that these "angels" were members of some prehistoric race whose intimacy with alien women of a lower race incurred the vengeance of their ruler and brought them to disaster. An exhaustive study of this question was recently completed by Dr. Leo Jung, one of the world's outstanding Biblical scholars and orientalists, and in his book *Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan Literature* he concludes that the "Sons of God" were not spiritual beings, but of the flesh—princes or rulers of men, a belief also advanced by St. Augustine, the church father of the fourth century, and the Slavonic "Book of Enoch."

Today the picture of earth's past is puzzling, confusing. But slowly, as research and discovery continues, the picture will take form, and it is certain that when it is finally completed it will present an astonishing drama with players we little suspect ever existed.

COMING: THE GREEN MAN . . . A New Novel

THE SHAVER MYSTERY

Interesting new bits of information concerning the caves of Mr. Shaver, his dero, the tero, and other factors which constitute today's "Question No. 1"

VINCENT H. GADDIS comes up with some bits of information he dug up which seem to apply to the Shaver Mystery. We present them here for what they are worth:

* * *

A POSSIBLE case of dero influence has been reported to the writer from Portville, N. Y., just north of Shaver's Pennsylvania area. His name is withheld by request. He is a farmer. Phenomena consist of buzzing noises, vortex manifestations (strange silence—with his voice echoing), and a "strange animal" of large size in the vicinity that killed dogs and was pursued by farmers. Latter was reported in the *Orlean Times-Herald*. More data has been requested.

* * *

IN A series of booklets written by Dr. M. Doreal, issued by the Brotherhood of the White Temple, 1600 Logan St., Denver 5, Colo., the following claims are made:

That the elder god-race existing on the earth before the Adamites were physical beings, of large size, a long life span, and that they were here for several million years. Moreover, they did not completely abandon the earth, but still exist in several underground centers protected by "warps" in space.

That the seven great centers are located as follows: Shamballa in Tibet, Mitcolin in Yucatan, the Atlas Mountains of the Sahara, the Gobi Desert, Canada, the Hartz Mountains in Germany, and under Mt. Shasta in California. The so-called Polar Paradise, or "Northern Shamballa" might be added, an area located near the magnetic North Pole.

That Mt. Shasta is a guard colony for imprisoned ancient Lemurians of an evil nature (who originally arrived here from an outer planet in our solar system), this prison being located in an underground area beneath the Pacific, the hidden entrance located in the Caroline Islands. The writer presumes that this entrance is in Metalanin, the mysterious lost city of the Carolines known as the "Venice of the Pacific." This abandoned city covered eleven square miles and was capable of housing two million persons. Its canals are large enough to hold a modern battleship, yet the island of Ponape on which it is located is incapable of

supporting more than 20,000 inhabitants. See "The Problem of Lemuria," by Lewis Spence, and "Wonders of the Past."

Eight shafts are protected by a "blue" race of underworld beings. One of the entrances is given as not far from Sulphur Springs, Oklahoma, and within a mile of Bromide Springs. Another is in Kentucky. In "The Inner Earth," Doreal states that the late Floyd Collins, who died while trapped in Sand Cave, near Mammoth Cave, Ky., was returning from a contact with the blue race at the time of his death. He quotes Collins as stating: "I have seen the most wonderful things that man has ever dreamed of. I have seen something that the world would not dream of until they see it for themselves." He refused to say more until he was released, but he died before the rock pinning him down was removed. Check AP and UP dispatches for this quote.

Doreal writes: "There never was but one book written that told anything about the blue race and it was written by a man for a group of his private students and I have one of his letters in which he said: 'I will allow it to be published because people will look upon it as a fairy story.' That story was allegory but he told about the blue race and he tells of a man on the outer earth who entered the mysteries . . ." I have a copy of this very rare book. The book referred to is *Etidorpha, or The End of Earth—The Account of a Remarkable Journey*, by John Uri Lloyd, published by the Robert Clarke Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1895. The entrance is given as Biswell's Hill, Livingston County, Kentucky, not far from Smithland, but on the opposite side of Cumberland River from the town. The author of the book, now deceased, was a famous Cincinnati scientist. Cincinnati is my old home town. I never met Lloyd, but knew about him. I have a friend, a Cincinnati book dealer, who knew him well. He calls the book metaphysical fiction. Lloyd himself did not make the trip, according to the book. It was given to him by another man.

Doreal claims to have visited Shamballa and the Mt. Shasta colonies. They are cities of complex machines, guarded by a "warped-space screen." Of a dimensional nature, these screens might be compared to the etheric web that exists between the physical and astral worlds. Nevertheless, the fact that these centers and their op-

erating machinery are described as physical seems to me significant. Where there is so much smoke from so many different sources, there must be some fire. Doreal implies that all of these centers are "good." But are they? Other information implies that they are not. Only time will tell.

We are certainly on the trail of something here. For years—since 1800 over 200 reports—mysterious ships apparently from outer space have been visiting this earth in taboo areas. Something is going on that mankind in general little suspects. I have a number of late reports that are not in the Fortean records. They will be published shortly. The report of a rocket within a "meteorite" found off the California coast in the last issue of AS is of great interest to me because of other data that I have. The mysterious destruction of this vessel and the records was most certainly engineered by somebody to prevent more being learned. I know that efforts are being made by hidden forces to keep this knowledge from becoming known. Why?

So-called "spontaneous combustion of the human body" is actually an attack by entities who destroy with flame. I have recently completed a study of this matter, and this is my honest conclusion. How can one otherwise explain the great number of these occurrences during the winter of 1904-05 in England and Wales when so many other unexplainable occurrences were taking place? I place explosive and "gas" attacks in the same conclusion and I am placing this opinion on record in case anything happens to me. So far no attacks have been made on me, but I am protecting myself mentally, and have reason to believe that I may be protected by other influences.

I am advising that Doreal's booklets be read by all students of the Shaver matter. I do not believe that he is correct in all his statements, but there may be a basis underlying them, and this knowledge should be known to students simply as a matter of theory. I do know that most of his ideas on astral projection are correct. His method of projection by throwing consciousness "in a curve" via the pineal gland is correct (see Oliver Fox on this); his dimensional idea of the astral world as one of the curves in space-time (consider the "astral Tunnels" in this respect for long-distance projection and the fact that no true curve exists in our physical world—even a circle being simply a series of very tiny angles) is confirmed by Claude Bragdon (Fourth Dimensional Vistas) and P. D. Ouspensky (Tertium Organum).

I will issue these bulletins of information from time to time, and copies will be sent to a very limited number of students. Unless stated otherwise, this material may be published or rewritten or commented on in AS, Maxin-96, or Round Robin. It is offered for your enlightenment.

* * *

HERE we have an interesting comparison of what we might call the "occult" interpreta-

tion of the Shaver Mystery and the caves, with Shaver's concept of the caves. We have the seven great centers, including the Tibetan. But strangely, we have the doubt that any of them can be strictly classed as good in effect. In short, maybe it's as Shaver says, mostly "dero." We will be more than interested in the evolution of the thinking of all people on the Shaver Mystery, and we will present anything that seems to be constructive in nature. We consider honest research constructive, and the question of its accuracy is of no moment. We tend to agree, with Shaver, that underground cities with machines in them are almost never beneficial. We don't believe good needs to hide itself, especially good as powerful as this is presumed to be.

* * *

WE HAVE a report from Peru that after every earthquake, mysterious sounds are heard: sounds that are startlingly like the sound of huge boulders falling far under the surface of the earth. They are distinctly classified as falling objects, as stones falling from the roof of a cave to the floor, and not as the rumbling sound of shifting rock strata that accompanies some earthquakes. Do any of our readers know anything more about this mysterious aftermath of Peruvian earthquakes? It is said that the falling rocks are heard as much as twenty minutes after the quake itself. And that a "hollow booming" noise is a very dominant characteristic.

* * *

MAYBE we can now trust the army to do what it has been impossible to interest anybody else in doing—thoroughly explore the caves we do know about! The army is interested in investigating Mammoth and Carlsbad Caverns as possible sites for war plants of the future, in the light of having heavy industry vital to making war permanently moved into them to great depths. If the dero exist, and the lost cities of the ancients, maybe the army will soon come up with the proof. It is well-known that the cavern areas in these two locales are immensely extensive, and one of them alone could house our entire population. Taking this fact into consideration, and realizing that only very scratchy exploration has ever been made of any of these caves, and none to any depth at all, we wonder why those doubters who keep scoffing say "If they existed, why haven't they been found—our caves have been very well explored." The fact is, they have NOT been explored. For instance, there is a hole in a cave in Mexico which is more than 6000 feet deep (by measured lines) and if the caves do go down that far, we can assume it possible for almost anything to exist down there with no danger of our discovering it from where we sit! So let's not go around making ridiculous claims about how much we know about our caves.

REPORT FROM THE

IN 1839 a man named P. Cudworth, who also use an "Esq." and a "B.H." after his name, "looked into a book of fate" and there read what would happen in the next hundred years. He never elaborated on how he knew these things, but it might well be that he "heard voices," or had "dreams." Be that as it may, he made a few predictions that are worth pointing out 47 years later. Here they are, briefly:

He predicted that tobacco, liquor and gum would become giant industries. He said the Polynesians would vanish with the white man's invasion. He predicted that conquering armies would run wild, and the end would be a world conflagration. These things have certainly come true to the letter. With the exception of the Polynesian, who still exists, but is rapidly disappearing, each of these things is now history.

Cudworth went on to say Americans would abandon the Monroe Doctrine; that they would resort to taking spoils of war; that the courts would become corrupt and the amount of money a man had would decide his guilt or innocence; that our government would embark on foreign wars; that America would acquire land in the China sea and that lives and money would be spent in constant protection of those properties; that industry would go to foreign countries which employ coolie labor, flood the home market with these cheaply produced goods and ruin the American laborer who would starve with no work to do; that all of Africa would become an enslaved industrial nation of the British; that the regular army would overthrow the civil government and would be the law of the land; that a coolies immigration would break the unions; that Malay pirates would become the worst menace of all; that leprosy and cholera would rage across the United States and that the Mississippi would become a disease breeder, principally of malaria which would become a monster evil in America; that women would soon rule the country; that anarchism would be followed by barbarism; that a civil war would overthrow all government; that all nations would become republics the world over and that complete personal liberty would become a fact; that our civilization would end before 1999 due to a comet and huge earthquakes and tidal waves running mountain high.

Pretty gloomy outlook, eh? But enough of it seems to be coming true to consider that Cudworth was quite a discerning chap.

* * *

CONFUCIUS (or as he was otherwise called, Kayu) is credited with having condensed eighteen thousand books into twenty volumes, containing the cream of knowledge of his day, and deleting all that which was inconsistent, contradictory, or unprovable. It is said that he had sev-

enty-two assistants who read the books and made reports on them, then Confucius assembled the reports and dictated his twenty volumes. The seventy-two assistants then re-wrote the books, which took eight and one-half years. At the end of that time Confucius examined them, and from his wisdom, made changes that required two more years of work. When completed, six copies were made of each book for each of the seventy-two assistants.

The titles of the books are as follows:

1. *Of The Creator.* 2. *Of The Plan Of Corporeal Worlds.* 3. *Of Light And Heat.* 4. *Of The Unseen Worlds.* 5. *Of The Intermediate World.* 6. *Of Shang Te (The True God).* 7. *Of False Gods.* 8. *Of Hell.* 9. *Of The Highest Heavens.* 10. *Of The Administration Of The Gods Over Mortals.*

These first ten books were called "The Books of Great Learning" and were made the "Standard" of the empire by the Sun Emperor.

The following ten books were called "The Lesser Scholarships":

1. *Axioms.* 2. *The Perfect Man.* 3. *The Mean Man.* 4. *Purification.* 5. *Divination.* 6. *Maxims.* 7. *Love.* 8. *Book Of Histories.* 9. *Book Of Holies.* 10. *Book Of Gems.*

Later on Confucius wrote six more books, making a total of twenty-six. Their titles were as follows:

1. *A Book Of Family Sayings.* 2. *A Book Of Ancelects.* 3. *A Book On Government.* 4. *A Book On Life.* 5. *A Book On Punishment.* 6. *A Book On Inventions.*

What is most interesting about these books is that it is said Confucius listened to "voices" and as a result committed some "blunders." But on the whole; his works were the greatest collection of knowledge that ever existed in the world to the present day, and were thousands of years the "official" books of the Chinese Empire.

They are still magnificent today.

* * *

HAVE you ever heard the expression "he has the inside track"? It has an incredibly ancient history, as much as six thousand years old. The planet Mercury was supposed by the ancients to run on a circle nearest the sun. Thus, the inside circle. When this became applied to racing, in the days of the Phoenicians, having the inside track was called "Inqua" from which we get our present-day "equestrian." The "inqua" medal is engraved with an outer and inner circle with a star in the center, representing the place of the sun. This medal is used today on the brow-band of a horse bridle.

* * *

ONE of the greatest educators of all time was a man named Capilya, of India, who lived at the same time as another great educator, Moses.

FORGOTTEN PAST

He taught, morally, the same things that Moses taught, duplicating the feats of Moses in India. He live three thousand four hundred years ago and he restored to the believers in one Great Spirit, the right to hold Property in India, which had been taken from them by the false god worshippers who ruled at the time. Peculiarly, he was, as Moses was, a foster-child to a king, being adopted by King Yokovrana. He restored the teachings of Zarathustra, which had been distorted, and wrote a book of Maxims by which India guided its destiny for many centuries, and thereby became a world leader in peace and plenty.

* * *

FOR students who are interested in checking, it is an interesting fact to note that at the time Moses' mother hid him in the bulrushes where he would be sure to be found by the king's men, or by persons loyal to the government, there was a royal decree to kill all male Hebrew children. Since birth registration of all Egyptians was complete, it would seem that Moses' mother didn't think very deeply over her son's chances for life. On sheer "luck" it seems depend the greatest events in world history. What if the Pharaoh's daughter had not been the one to find the baby?

* * *

THE ancient Indian races built a great civilization extending from Central America to Lake Superior and to Lake Erie. This civilization it was that built the mysterious mines in the Lake Superior region which supplied copper to the whole Indian empire. But this empire collapsed when individual cities went to war against each other, and it was into this picture of supreme conflict and greatest agony of the Indian race that Hiawatha (of whom most people today know little except that Longfellow wrote a poem about him and made of him a fictional character) was born. In Indian, his name was pronounced Eawah-tah. Hiawatha became a great educator, and perhaps the first real politician of his time. He restored the doctrine of the Great Spirit, which has remained inviolate among Indians to this day, and formed the first "United States of America" called the "O-pah-E-go-quim" or (as it has been Anglicized) Algonquin. The Algonquin nation was identical in formation to our own United States. Hiawatha, on a visit to two Indian leaders of the time, Took-shein and Che-guh, is said to have been the recipient of a visit from space of a spaceship containing a highly civilized race who gave him the political set-up and the moral background for his new "united nations." This legend is interesting because even today we have stories of space ships visiting the earth mysteriously. Be that as it may, the story of Hiawatha may well be one of the most vital and true stories of all time, and may have changed the destiny

We present here interesting theory and possible fact culled from your own letters, from historical records, from various books and manuscripts, which might well be ancient truth

of the world and provided the model for our present-day America.

* * *

THE crime of Bishop Landa in destroying the libraries of the Aztecs was a comparatively small one to the crime of the priest, Coatluc. In the year, 390, at his instigation, the library at Alexandria was destroyed. With it went ancient knowledge that can never be replaced. However, it was rebuilt, and restocked with as much of the ancient knowledge as could be gathered from the whole of the then known European world. In 640 three Christian monks totally destroyed it, to keep it from falling into the hands of the Arabs, who were Mohammedans. The Caliph was urged to have the destruction stopped, but his classical reply was: "If the writings of the Greeks agree with the books of God, they are useless and not worth preserving; if they disagree they are pernicious and ought to be destroyed." With those words was lost everything that man had recorded up to that date which was the sum total of Greek and European culture and knowledge. Who can say what the path of history might have been had those books remained for man to read?

* * *

THERE was a certain enumeration of Time many thousands of years ago called the "Fib-tus of Haal." This time was equivalent to 24,000 years, and referred to the average position of the North Star. The same term applies to certain distances from the sun, where planets have orbits. It is by this rule that astronomers, to this day, judge of the place where a planet is likely to be discovered. Thus we see that the ancient Persians and Indians knew as much of astronomy as we today, and knew the North Star's average position, and the laws under which the orbits of the planets maintain certain rhythmic relationships.

* * *

SOME ten thousand years ago prophets were tested by binding them on a wheel to test their spirit power to be released. These wheels are still to be seen at crossroads in parts of India and China, and are the symbol of the Creator. The wheel, with its spokes, is the origin of the jaugernacht, the skull and crossbones (the sign of those who have perished on the wheel as false prophets). It is also the origin of today's sign of the cross.

DISCUSSIONS



AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

REPORT FROM PROF. LINSLEY

Sirs:

The letter signed by V. G., San Francisco, on page 178 of your magazine for June, 1946, which uses the name of Prof. Linsley and Chabot Observatory of Oakland is entirely without sense or foundation in fact if the references are to Prof. Earle G. Linsley, Director of Chabot Observatory, Oakland, Calif.

I have an idea the letter was written by an unbalanced service man who came back from experiences overseas and visited at the Observatory while convalescent at a hospital near here. We did not learn his name.

The whole thing should be ignored.

Earle G. Linsley
Astronomer Chabot Obs.
Prof. Astronomy Mills College
4917 Mountain Boulevard
Oakland 2, California

We certainly appreciate your assistance in clarifying this matter, Mr. Linsley. You know, of course, that we are interested in tracking anything down that may prove newsworthy, and it is impossible to do otherwise than to publish it as fiction and request our readers to check on its truth. Your instant response is much appreciated both by this editor and by our readers.

Regarding matters of this type, readers, how about forming a little group called "Cave Hunters Mutual Benefit Society"? Any of you readers who have time on your hands, and who live in large cities, and who are interested enough in the Shaver Mystery to act as amateur detectives for us, might offer their services to track down an occasional lead such as this "space ship" report of VG upon which Mr. Linsley reported. One of our readers (Queen's Knight is his pen name) took the trouble to visit Mr. Linsley and check on VG's report and found it false. Other readers checked on Mr. Johns' cave in Mendocino county, Calif., and found Mr. Johns reluctant to guide them to it, thus nullifying the value of his information.

We would like a list of people like this to whom we could send local reports as we receive them and thus check up on them before we publish them. Such a "vigilante" group would stop a lot of these smart alecks who send in false reports

and also allow us to get "on the ball" on those which have some fact in them.

You all know we are perfectly serious about this matter, and we intend to get to the bottom of it before we are through. So, how many of you readers would like a little "adventure" and "excitement" acting as our private researchers in the interest of truth and knowledge?—Ed.

HAMBONE AND SODA EXPLOSIVES

Sirs:

I note your recent editorial comment on my own attitude, and that of the Round Robin Bulletin, on the Shaver-Dero affair, and hope you will allow me to correct the impression you have given.

For one thing, the Round Robin is not a religious or spiritualistic publication. Its editor personally accepts the basic spiritualist ideas of survival and communication, but the Bulletin carries on no propaganda, and tries to be entirely factual and cold-blooded in dealing with "supernormal" happenings. When alleged spirit communications seem to be important, and reported by competent observers under good conditions, the Bulletin reports them as they stand, without further guarantee.

Recent communications, clairvoyant and clairaudient, both in normal consciousness and in trance, appeared (whatever their true nature may be) to emanate from intelligences of a very high order. (Your comment that spirits as a rule are dumb, idiotic and foul is as incredibly stupid as anything can be.) These intelligences were questioned directly about the "Dero," and in reply affirmed their existence, gave certain foci, pointed out that they have existed since Atlantean days, and advised letting them rigidly alone. They stated that any danger which may really exist originates among highly intelligent spirits of the astral levels, and that the Dero, by reason of their low mentality, were easily subjected to hypnotic suggestion, and became the tools of the astral mischief-makers.

The position taken by the Communicators, was that to direct public attention to this matter, and to awaken fear, interest and discussion, was to play directly into the hands of the astral entities. Every person who is frightened, and every irre-

(Continued on page 166)



KNOWLEDGE
THAT HAS
ENDURED WITH THE
PYRAMIDS

A SECRET METHOD FOR THE MASTERY OF LIFE

WHENCE came the knowledge that built the Pyramids and the mighty Temples of the Pharaohs? Civilization began in the Nile Valley centuries ago. Where did its first builders acquire their astounding wisdom that started man on his upward climb? Beginning with naught they overcame nature's forces and gave the world its first sciences and arts. Did their knowledge come from a race now submerged beneath the sea, or were they touched with Infinite inspiration? From what concealed source came the wisdom that produced such characters as Amenhotep IV, Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, and a host of others? Today it is known that they discovered and learned to interpret certain *Secret Methods* for the development of their inner power of mind. They learned to command the inner forces within their own beings, and to master life. This secret art of living has been preserved and handed down throughout the ages. Today it is extended to those who dare to use its profound principles to meet and solve the problems of life in these complex times.



AMENHOTEP IV
Founder of Egypt's
Mystery Schools

This Sealed Book—FREE

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DISCUSSIONS

AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bonquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.



(Continued from page 164)

sponsible fool who starts Dero-hunting as a high adventure, is a potential channel for vicious forces. This principal is well known in all "occult" work, and has been recognized for thousands of years.

Neither the Communicators (I believe) nor the Round Robin Bulletin, nor its Editor, would oppose careful and quiet study of the problem by persons equipped with both scientific and occult knowledge. But it is my own firm conviction that ignorant and flamboyant commercial exploitation of this subject is one of the most vicious journalistic performances on record. It is as if you had discovered how to make some high explosives out of (say) hambones and soda, and had set every 'teen-aged brat in the country to doing it, in a fine burst of enthusiasm for "science" and for public service.

Well, the Round Robin did not and will not start any crusade, about anything or for anybody. It reported these communications because they seemed highly intelligent and extraordinary, and dealt with important matters. They came through well-to-do and well-educated people in private life, who knew nothing of spiritism prior to this affair—and whose names will not be given. The editor simply reported them to his own small circle of readers, as something worth reporting. No one is asked to believe them. But when such matters are reported by responsible people, well-informed students of occult matters lend an attentive ear without becoming unduly credulous. We have never addressed any communication to your magazine.

None of us know very much about the mysteries of this world, or of any other. Those of us who have given some thirty-odd years to "occult" and esoteric studies are overwhelmed by the sense of our own ignorance; so too, is any genuine scientist who has any turn for philosophic thought. We note with admiration the vast certitudes of other folk. But we object to a hopeless and deliberate intermingling of vital truths with commercial fiction. We think (many of us) that you are doing a bitter disservice to humanity in this particular service, though probably not through any intent.

Perhaps I should add that the Communicators referred to stated that the "machines" existed as fully formed products (thought-productions) in astral matter, that the aim of the malicious devisers of them is to get earth folk to recreate them, or to get the idea and pattern and make them—and

that the construction of these would be a very great disaster for our world. The general nature of them was also given; they constitute an unparalleled means of moral degradation. Once in the hands of our already vicious humanity, they would be an evil far in excess of that of drugs or stimulants. This knowledge, in its elements at least, exists among certain students of occult matters and does not depend on the communications here discussed. Perhaps you can understand why, from their standpoint, such students are deeply alarmed by the outburst of ignorant enthusiasm you are ignorantly fostering under the guise of "science." It is from the scientific as well as the humanitarian standpoint, that many of us deplore your efforts—comparable, let us say, to giving hair-trigger automatics to children for playthings.

Since you are so deeply involved in this matter, and since you often give space to adverse criticism, and have mentioned particularly the small Bulletin published by me, I am in hopes that you will find space for this letter also (though I am also in doubt). Thank you, anyhow, for the courtesy of your attention.

Meade Layne, M.A., Editor
The Round Robin
3615 Alexia Place
San Diego 4, California

Let's take your letter paragraph by paragraph.

1. We regret having given an erroneous impression of you and the Round Robin. We hope that publication of this letter will correct that.

2. We did not say your bulletin was not factual. In fact, we know that you report nothing except news items which are vouched for as factual by reliable persons.

3. The "communications" you refer to, however, are no more "provable" as true in content than Shaver's "rays" from the "telaug" or the "voices" so many of our readers report to us. We believe Shaver and our reporting readers (with the exception of the pranksters and cranks whom we cannot avoid entirely) to be equally reliable in their statements to us. It is factual only that they report these "communications"; just as the only fact in your "spirit communications" that can be unquestionably accepted is that they are reported to you. The inherent truth of the "message" is another thing altogether. As to the "dumb, idiotic, foul" nature of "communicating spirits" (as a rule) we refer you to such investigators as Dr. Carl A. Wickland. Your editor has done some investigating too, and he is firmly impressed as to the "stupidity" and lack of the "niceties" in those "spirits" he has heard and heard of. (If they were spirits, and even that can't be proved.) But, when you say your "message" came from "intelligences of a very high order" (warning us of the need to ignore the dero) and in the same paragraph say that the dero are only "tools" of "highly intelligent spirits" you are stating as plainly as we've ever seen it stated that the senders of your messages are of the same ilk as the ones who hyp-

notize the dero. So, on one hand "high spirits" make mischief utilizing the cavern degenerates; and on the other "high spirits" warn us to ignore the cavern degenerates, confessing at the same time that they really exist, have the machines Shaver describes, and are very powerful. That's what we said! Just as Hitler said "I have no designs on my neighbors" while he was designing!

4. Your "communicators" give their reason for ignoring the dero as "to direct public attention to this matter is to play into the hands of the astral entities." This "principle" IS well known in occult work, and it is the **SECRECY** that Mr. Shaver (and your editor) decries. But, Mr. Layne, it IS a public matter. It is the **PUBLIC** to whom these things are happening. Shaver is one of that public. Thousands—no millions! (statistically, if not factually speaking)—who are plagued by voices and many other things are members of that public. **THEY** don't believe in that ostrich-in-the-sand business! According to your "communicators" what we should have done at Pearl Harbor when the Japs attacked was discreetly to look the other way, conceal from public attention, **IGNORE** the Japs, and they'd be **HELPLESS**!

5. In reading the phrases "ignorant and flamboyant commercial exploitation" and "most vicious journalistic performance on record" we find that we have nothing to match them. All we can say is: are you sure?

6. It is perfectly true that you never addressed any communication to this magazine. You sent a two-page "confidential" message to one of our article writers (who was in our confidence and therefore better able to impress us) to forward to us. It was forwarded, but we did not publish the information. Instead, we waited until the matter was "factually" reported in the Round Robin, which can be subscribed to by anyone, just as can **AMAZING STORIES**, and since you took the liberty of mentioning items from **AMAZING STORIES** on several occasions, we felt perfectly justified in commenting on information contained in the Round Robin.

7. If causing people to think is doing a disservice to humanity, maybe we've got the wrong slant on life, or maybe we're rooting for the wrong side? Maybe you think we ought to be on the side of "keep the people from thinking and there'll be no change in the status quo."

8. Personally, we never saw a "thought-production" and we wonder if anyone has. Just how does a machine work that is made of thoughts? And we seem to differ on these machines. Shaver says they already exist in the caves, and on the surface, and you say they exist in the astral. Let's be at least quasi-factual and refer only to machines made of stuff that can be worked with the hands and not with thought waves. And what do you mean by "vicious humanity"? We are all human beings, and only a very few of us are vicious. Weak, yes, but not vicious.

9. And in conclusion, since we really are engaged in the same thing, the pursuit of knowledge

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and truth, we have no argument, so we are recommending that (as part of the search for knowledge) the viewpoints given in your *ROUND ROBIN* are quite necessary to a full picture, and we think many of our readers interested in such things ought to contact you. And although you refuse to give the identity of your reporters, we feel that if the danger is so great they ought to be a little less shy and fight for their cause in the open. It would be a shame if we gave disastrous attention to the dero and it turned out that a little *FACT* producing on the part of those communicators who are so *WISE* and so *INTERESTED* IN US *POOR HUMANS* would have been better than the stupid secrecy they insist must be maintained. Mr. Layne, the *TRUTH* doesn't skulk down alleys!—Ed.

MR. HANSEN, A PRINCESS PREDICTS! Sirs:

I haven't written any fan mail to a magazine ever. But your Shaver Mysteries have me worked up. They seem so incredible, yet there is a vein of sincerity running throughout. I have evidently missed one or two of the series, but I have read enough to get the gist of it, I believe. If it weren't for my own peculiar impressions, I would in truth laugh at them. But crazily enough, I too, have "delusions." I am *not* the child born of my parents. I have at some former time been a power or a princess whose will it was not wise to stray from. By "wise" I mean the results of outraged nature itself taking revenge, not human means. This conviction is strong and I have never confided it to anyone for fear of being laughed at. And—this "princess" episode seems incredibly ancient. Could this in any way be connected with the Mystery or is it after all what the doctors call a psychosis? It certainly does not dominate my thought, for only in flashes do I get the pictures. Can you help me resolve this? By the way, my birthdate is November 16, 1920, and I should judge close to midnight. The latter data may be referred to "Star-science Department" if it does not correlate with the Mystery.

Also I have the conviction that there is a part of my mind that could be released, giving greater thought-power. As if knowledge was trembling on the threshold and being held back by a tenuous veil that could be snapped by a proper stimulus. That this knowledge was of importance. I feel a sort of wonderment about this knowledge and yet a dread of the responsibility it must surely bring. There is a stimulus for this and under right happenstance I might stumble on it and perhaps again I never shall. These may be all common delusions, but I am too much of an egoist to believe so.

The Shaver Mysteries have resolved my own beliefs concerning the ancient "myths." That is, that there is a truth, of great magnificence, under the aged layers of mouth-to-mouth story telling.

Here is something else to chew on. How about putting Bernice J. Peterson from "What Man Can Imagine" with "When Flesh Defies Fire" by Vincent H. Gaddis with a dollop of "Energy From

Beyond" to bring this about? One can see the possibilities?!

I am impatiently awaiting the publishing of some revelations about the cavern entrances that are in some way connected with the "Helpers" that you will authorize soon.

I do hope your Mr. Hansen is safe. I read of him in the issue preceding the last one and the warning published with it. I should like to know, for it will be from him that the above revelations will come. Rather startling ones, too.

Regina

Your editors have a theory about the business of people not believing their parents are really the ones primarily responsible for their being here on this earth. But as yet it is only a theory, and until we can definitely pin it down with what we deem to be absolutely necessary scientific accuracy, we will refrain from making any statement. However, we can give you a rather common axiom of psychiatry which tells us one reason for this strange impression that people have:

Briefly, some people find the idea of their birth as a result of the functions of sex rather abhorrent, so they rationalize their birth to the point where it seems reasonable to them to believe that their parents are not really responsible for them, but that some higher, more satisfactory power caused them to come into being. Or even more common, the idea that because papa and mama didn't rush to buy them candy every time they yelled for it, that they were refusing because actually they were not really parents and therefore had reason to "persecute" their child. Let it be known, though, that your editor regards psychiatric "reasoning" of this type as exactly what it is, just more rationalization, and not to be accepted as fact. It's possible that these are the reasons, but not necessarily so.

As for the idea of having been a princess at some incredibly ancient time, it is upon this one *FACT* (that people do have such ideas and memories) that those who believe in reincarnation base their belief. But we wish to point out that since it is possible to explain this phenomenon in many other ways, it is not acceptable evidence of reincarnation. It is much more logical to say you were not a princess, but that in some way that "memory" was impressed on your mind from outside that mind. Is it Shaver's "telaug" that gives us these "memories" as part of the "thought records" it produces?

If you ever "recall" that knowledge you speak of, write it down! Don't lose it. We could show you a huge file full of such knowledge already passed on to us, for safekeeping.

Your prediction, or feeling, that Mr. Hansen is to give us some vital information is interesting. We believe Mr. Hansen to be a valuable researcher and scientist, and we believe he has already given the world immensely valuable information in his "Scientific Mysteries"—Ed.

ARE 10,000 READERS PRETENDING?

Sirs:

Have just finished the May issue of your AMAZING STORIES; even read the correspondence. I want to say I thoroughly enjoy the stories—as fiction!

How anyone can imagine the Shaver stories have any basis in fact or reality, I'm sure I don't know! Why, just think what effect one good earthquake would have on the various underworld "cities and roads"! Wham! Bam! and everything would shaken and cracked! And we have many earthquakes.

Just think of all the mines and oil wells that have been drilled deep into the earth. Have any of these drillings ever reported coming across any extraordinary roads or buildings deep within the earth? None! Anything unusual would be found in due time, and since nothing has ever been reported, the conclusion must be that all this "Shaver Mystery" is simply a well-written myth.

A good many neurotic people imagine that their parents are not really their parents, but that they are descended from some unknown persons. I think this notion is caused by some trivial occurrence in early childhood, and the youngster begins to brood about it, finally saying to himself "My Mamma and Daddy aren't really my father and mother. That's why they won't buy me all the candy I want." And they go on from there, building up a dream world within their own minds, instead of playing baseball on the vacant lot.

I enjoy the Shaver stories. All power to him; but please don't add any more confusion to an already bewildered world, by pretending these things are really true.

Selma M. Richardson,
(Mrs. H. D. Richardson)
Rt 1, Box 179,
Rainier, Oregon

Why should an earthquake have any more effect on an underground city than on a surface city? We cannot imagine a surface city which would not be shaken and cracked, wham, bam! We have many earthquakes.

The deepest mine or well on earth is a mere mile and a quarter deep, not enough to have hit into any of Shaver's underground cities which are located anywhere from a mile to four or more miles deep.

If you lived in a cave and had never seen a star, would that prove there were none?

As we mentioned before, psychiatry has placed labels on human behavior, but they are "assumed" labels, and cannot be proved. We agree that many neurotics may delude themselves, but we do not agree that all people who do not think as we think are neurotics.

If, as you say, this is all fiction, then don't you think it will serve to clear up some of the confusion in the world today if we reveal that an amazing proportion of our population is living in a dream world that will possibly serve to make things even more confused?—Ed.

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HAUSER SCORES BIG!

Sirs:

Heinrich Hauser's "Agharti" is, to my mind, the greatest science fiction novel ever to appear in the Ziff-Davis AMAZING and also deserves to rank alongside the so-called science fiction "classics."

Hauser's style is both pleasant and mature. It is devoid, mainly, of the childish slant taken by the majority of your yarns and still does not resort to the scientific hodge-podge prevalent in a certain other sf publication. I am looking forward to further yarns from Hauser in the near future.

Gerry de la Ree
9 Bogert Place
Westwood, N. J.

We are indeed delighted to see that you like Mr. Hauser's novel so well. And as for the next one, we can guarantee that never before in science fiction history has anything like it ever been published! We say this knowing that you'll be more than critical of it, but we are betting that when you read his new novel, soon to appear, you'll say to yourself, this man is a writer!—Ed.

VISIONS?

Sirs:

Rog Phillips "Atom War" is true. (An opinion).

This writer can only claim "semi-knowledge", though very personal knowledge, of the truth of the above statement.

The writer has had a few "dreams" or "visions" which in the past have come true. The recipient of such a vision is usually impressed very strongly of its future materialization or actuality by certain psychic elements, characteristics of an "extrasensory" nature, which always accompanies such visions, and conversely, is always lacking in ordinary dreams. On the one hand, awakening to ob-

jective consciousness does not effect a diminishing of the strong impression of REALITY or its impending ACTUALITY. Also, in many cases, (and this is one of them) the recipient is impressed as to either the *exact* or the *general* point of time when such materialization will take place—in this case the writer had a GENERAL impression. On the other hand, the ordinary dream is usually accepted as such—just an ordinary dream, caused perhaps by lobster and ice cream.

First, Rog Phillips wrote OPTIMISTICALLY when he dramatized atomic warfare starting somewhere around 25 years hence. This writer's definite impression was that atomic chaos WILL BEGIN SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW YEARS—I will say WITHIN seven years from today.

Second—the locale of my vision was a typical, large American city, within our nation. The desolation I will presently describe was impressed upon me as being the state of EVERY CITY IN THE LAND. There is no impression of the future state of other sections or nations of the globe—just America. However, I suppose we can ASSUME that much of the globe will suffer similar destruction.

Third, it all seemed to have happened practically OVERNIGHT. It was all over before the remaining few survivors could bring their shocked minds to a realization of what had happened.

Now to describe the picture of utter desolation. The scene was the former main thoroughfare of a very large U. S. city, one of the largest. What city it was, I do not know, but it may be that I WILL PERSONALLY WITNESS THIS SCENE IN ACTUALITY IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

What can I describe that you cannot already envision? Perhaps one of the best descriptions would be to say that the city was COMPLETELY AND THOROUGHLY GUTTED. Not so much PANCAKED as was Hiroshima or Nagasaki, as it was GUTTED—almost completely leveled. Burned out. At this point, permit me to quote some sentences from "The Atomic Future", by Howard W. Blakeslee. Quote—

"One of the destructive powers of atomic bombs . . . is the incendiary effect. In world War II incendiary bombs did far more damage than high explosive. The atomic bomb is by far the most incendiary weapon ever invented. The heat of millions of degrees starts fires instantly. Concrete structures may stand without much damage, apparently, and a few actually did so in Japan. But . . . the flash of heat boiled and eddied throughout the buildings, starting fires wherever there was anything inflammable." Unquote.

In this vision, it seemed that quite a few concrete or similar structures still were partially erect, though terribly damaged, as the cities of Germany looked after mass bomb raids. But they were just skeleton structures, completely burned out, it seemed.

Perhaps the most curious thing, however, was

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the mental and emotional state of the comparatively few survivors. Out of what had seemed must have been a population of at least many hundred of thousands, there seemed to be not more than a few thousand left, at best. This is a conservative estimate. You know how individuals will do some of the most illogical things in an emergency? Such as a woman might scream that her cake is burning in the oven as she watches her house burn down, and try to save it? These survivors, however, were not quite as bad as THAT. They were all gathered together in what was the main thoroughfare, such as Times Square would be; a few hundred at best. At one side of the square, many mechanics were feverishly working to repair smashed busses and damaged, salvaged motors for vital transportation.

God Bless American guts, "never say die" spirit!

Standing on the opposite side of the street or square, lined up along the sidewalk, were men and women waiting for bus transportation. Quite a few busses seemed to have been put in running order, these busses came by at quick intervals, accepted their load of passengers, and would be waved on to their destination. The men and women were all dressed in as neat a manner as possible, and all acted as nonchalant as possible, as though all had agreed silently to act as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened! They were trying to "carry on life as before!" Behind the people, within the gutted structures, improvised "hash joints" were busy serving breakfast to these people. Incidentally, the scene of the vision was early morning—I could sense the crispness of the morning air. One of the mechanics across the way yelled over to one of the appointed bus officials something like this—"Don't worry, Joe, we'll have this one (bus) ready before you know it."

There was one emotional radiation from these survivors which far exceeded all other emotions and feelings; this was that HUMAN FELLOWSHIP WAS NOW RECOGNIZED AND CRAVED AS THE MOST PRECIOUS THING IN ALL THE WORLD. They were now all united by the common bond of misery and utter despair. I cannot stress the latter too much. Words cannot describe the utter desolation, the deathlike silence of this corpse of ashes which just previously was a red-blooded "civilization." These people were SHOCKED. Just on the borderline of mental and emotional breakdown. They seemed to be similar to a human just saved from horrible death, which human smiles, jokes about it, and then drops down in collapse from the shock 15 minutes later.

Just as those queer animals, the Lemmings, which periodically migrate into the sea, on the theory that they are traveling ago-old paths of migration which have now sunk into the sea; so these people seemed to persist in "carrying on life as before" such as going daily to their places of previous employment to resume and carry on their precious jobs, returning to gutted offices, (and all



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this in a completely desolate, destroyed city), all still moving and acting in accord with previous thought patterns and work habits, instead of seeking a more bountiful way of life; they were simply not yet oriented to their present environment—bewildered.

Harry J. Gardiner, Publisher, of the Golden Dawn Press, 1044 South Olive Street, Los Angeles 15, Calif., is warning of the same thing; by all means send for his current booklet entitled "1946 WHAT'S NEXT". It's one dollar. (No, I'm not one of his "salesmen")! He gives very helpful details of Pyramid dates and "Cubits of Time", and details of the cycles of destiny of our nation, the U. S. which is the "New Atlantis."

That's about all there is to it. If this writer were a gifted story teller, he could probably spin another "super-yarn" on atomic chaos for publication.

Remember, now, this writer is not predicting anything—at best, all that can be done is to describe the vision and the impressions gained, that is all. May the whole thing be one false nightmare induced by suggestion! This is my prayer.

The whole "Shaver Mystery" has been seriously followed by myself. Truly, it all seems like something of "vague familiarity". Most all of OAHSP has been read by myself, also. Truly a thought provoking volume.

One of your readers of AMAZING STORIES wrote in one of the previous issues (you published his letter) that he made the "Shaver Alphabet" also fit such modern coined words such as JIVE and JUKEBOX, etc., and therefore the whole thing was slightly cock-eyed. Don't let him corner anyone with that argument. There is the doctrine that Higher Intelligence helps to influence humans whenever names or words are to be applied to persons or things; that the combinations of letters are not arranged by chance, as general opinion seems to think! For instance, to take NAMES OF persons—did you ever see many FAT Howards? LAW applies here as elsewhere. Different names seem to belong to different physical characteristics, as well as certain general personality characteristics. This is a study probably worthy of investigation. So if jive and jukebox fit the "Mantong" alphabet, it's undoubtedly not CHANCE!

With best wishes for True Knowledge, and in the Bond of the New Age, I am

Howard Dalis
 528 West Jefferson
 Phoenix, Arizona

There seems to be a wave of "predicting" disaster for the U. S. by atom bombs, earthquakes, comets, and so on. They source mainly in dreams or visions. Now, couldn't it be equally true that these visions, if induced by something REAL, might be false for all of that? Say, for instance, that Shaver's ray people were inducing these dreams just for the hell of it? Good joke, eh? Except that the power of suggestion is recognized

by the best of scientists and maybe if we go on talking like this, some damfool dictator will start throwing atom bombs around because he thinks it's "in the cards"! Personally your editor is gloomy about Man's ability to end wars, and he isn't going to be surprised if he does have to duck a few bombs himself before he dies a natural death. But let's not be GUIDED by dreams, or voices, or what have you. Chances are better than 99 to 1 that they are just plain lies or fiction. Remember, ancient Greece was destroyed because it listened to the Oracle!

As for how people react to bombing, how about London, Berlin, etc. They didn't drop dead fifteen minutes later from shock. We think your picture here is purely imaginary, and didn't even occur in your dream. You assumed that they would fall dead in fifteen minutes, but people just don't do that. At least, there's no records to prove it, and there's been plenty of bombing!

Your call for human fellowship is something not the maddest fanatic could deny. It seems to us that if mankind does not adopt a fraternal system of managing his affairs, he's going to wind up right where your dream puts him, behind the 8-ball. But we actually think mankind is progressing today in many mysterious ways toward true fraternity. No vast change in history takes place without a few upheavals in the process—and today the common man is fighting to come into his own.

As for prophets, we think they have as good a chance of being right as anybody, because prophecy is possible. There must be something to the old saying "coming events cast their shadow before them". Anyone who observes the "signs of the times" can see which way the wind blows.

As for the alphabet, there you have something! Few have yet realized the importance of the actual proof of the Shaver stories factual basis in this amazing common-denominator rosetta stone. A book is now being prepared which will present the facts in indisputable form.—Ed.

"AGHARTI" A CLASSIC

Sirs:

Just a bare flash in the ether to tell you that you have published a classic in Agharti and that you are carrying on in the best traditions of science fiction with the Shaver theories.

R. R. Anger
520 Highland Ave.
Ottawa, Ont.
Canada

Thanks, Mr. Anger. Them's mighty fine sounding words to your editor!—Ed.

WE ARE "LOOKING UP"

Sirs:

"Agharti," by Heinrich Hauser, in your July issue, is, I believe, one of AMAZING STORIES' finest literary efforts since Ziff-Davis started publishing it. It is a sad story; the sorrowful conclusion to it makes one feel pity toward Heinrich and Fran-

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cisca. There is a certain logical truthfulness to it too,—more so than in the Shaver tales. This, in spite of the fact that you admit "Agharti" is fiction.

The stories of Don Wilson, the Shaver tales, and "Agharti", plus maybe half a dozen other stories, have been the only decent things AMAZING has published in the last three years. Why is this? I think I know.

The best authors AS and FA had were being drafted or entering the service in another form. Those who were left had to work overtime to fill the pages. As a result, the stories took on a juvenile trend—they were hurriedly put together just to get the story over with. I think things are looking better now, though. Let's hope so, at least.

Now to get back to the July AMAZING. "To Whom It May Concern", "Luder Valley", and "The Brothers Shenanigan" complete the issue in that order. The last two I didn't care for very much. I am eagerly looking forward to the day when AS and FA will come out in big, 320-page editions. If I'm not mistaken, that day is not far off. Then, I hope, you will start again to reprint some of the old classics from the pre-Ziff-Davis AMAZING. However, I realize that most of the changes made in AS and FA have to be approved by the majority of your readers. I hope they approve of reprints.

Well, I think I've said all I had to say. I'll close now, asking you not to think too bad of me for my harsh criticism of the quality of your stories. I really am one of your most loyal readers.

Pvt Lester Mayer
Madigan Gen. Hospital
Sec. 4, Wd. 18
Ft. Lewis, Wash.

Was the ending to "Agharti" really sad? The editors thought that it expressed bright hope for the future, and for a race of man whose entire civilization was not directed toward death and destruction, but toward human rights and decency. Mr. Hauser has preached a terrific sermon, and he has done it without preaching, but with a sincerity that rings out and will not be put down.

It is true that writers, now that the war is over, are turning out better stories. Perhaps it has been the emotional experience that has sharpened their insight into the realities behind fiction writing. At any rate, many fine stories are coming across our desk.—Ed.

STILL UNEXPLAINED

Sirs:

I am enclosing an AP press dispatch which I cut out several months ago and have meant to send you before. I do not know whom the Colorado correspondent is that sent the tip from "the Great White Lodge of Lhasa, Tibet" but I think he makes sense.

A couple of months ago I read another AP dispatch about SIX NAVY PLANES disappearing

ALL AT ONE TIME off the coast of Florida. Hundreds of hours were spent searching for a trace of them but none was found. Wish I had cut this out for you also, but you can verify that yourself. This is one of the strangest happenings that I have ever heard of in my lifetime. Even if they had flown over a carpet of anti-aircraft fire one or two would have gotten through. As I remember the article it wasn't even storming.

Where can I obtain a large print of the interior of the GREAT PYRAMID OF GIZEH. You published a small one on the inside of a cover but it takes a magnifying glass to read it. Also, would like to buy a book that explains it in detail. Somewhere in some magazine or paper I read that the Pyramid showed that something would take place on Feb. 18th, 1946. I watched this date for a happening and something DID happen, although it might have been considered insignificant by some, it wasn't. The great steel strike, the GREATEST STRIKE IN HISTORY, ended on Feb. 18th, 1946.

Edward R. Walker
127 East 5th St.
Pueblo, Colorado

The clipping sent us by Mr. Walker tells of "a Colorado correspondent forwarded a tip from 'the Great White Lodge of Lhasa, Tibet, hierarchy of 144 masters who rule the earth and all things about it' that the atom bomb was discovered 15 years too soon and that the world now faced its final conflict, the atom war to occur between now and 1956."

First we might say that we are not at all convinced that the 144 masters make sense. There is even less proof of their existence than of a derol. As for the dire prediction for 1956, it is because somebody fixed that date in measuring the length of the passage leading to the King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid. But for some inexplicable reason they stopped using the gauge of an inch to a year at 1901 and began calling an inch a month! That was to make the world war fit in, we think. So your steel strike date fits, as whatever happened on that date (and things happened every day during that period and still do!) would fit. The fact is, if the pyramid is prophetic, the 1956 date should be 2248 as the "end of the time". Your clipping only shows the effort of some pyramidologist (who is also probably hearing voices from the dero under Tibet . . . the good Tibetans don't go around predicting dire things . . .) to break into print. The 1956 date indicates that. The 144 masters do not rule AMAZING STORIES, just to give you one example of how they do not rule all things on and about the earth. Since they rule all things, how come the atom bomb slipped by them "15 years too soon"? For some lessons in lying, these masters ought to spend a week-end in Burlington, Wisconsin, with the Liar's Club!

About those navy planes, now you've got something! As we remember it, search planes also failed to come back. Not a sign, not a message,

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just instant disappearance. And no fuss about it since, just official forgetfulness. Your editor would like to **KNOW** what happened, because it wasn't anything ordinary. As a matter of fact, this is only one of hundreds of mysteries of this type which have baffled the world in the past few years. But we hear nothing further about them because "officialdom" and "explainers of everything by means of book larnin'" can't explain them. We think Shaver has come closest to a real explanation, and after all, a poor explanation is better than none at all.

As for reports from the "Great White Lodge", your editor has one which says, in effect, "Well, boys, we did it! Beat the Black Lodge to the punch with the atom bomb!" Which "White Lodge" report will you have? With or without salt.

Anybody else know anything about Tibet? Let's clear up all this humbug. Let's justify the good in Tibet, and smoke out the bad. Or else make 'em quit interfering in our lives!—Ed.

A PROPHECY FROM THE CAVES!

Sirs:

Cave ray—at which you laugh as an impossible hoax—is just so powerful they don't care what we say or how we say it. They are ready and able to take over any world government at any time. . . and will do so in the near future. When they do, you who scoff at Shaver and Palmer and others who know, will learn something about government. Elections will then be a thing of the past. As far as that goes, they don't have to take over the government; they can rule without making much visible change—and may be doing so from the non-existent caves right now, today.

Richard S. Shaver

We publish this letter from Mr. Shaver because it goes to prove what we have been saying, that even the "voices" of the cavern people, conveyed to Mr. Shaver by their telang rays, make this kind of prediction. It is really very stupid of Mr. Shaver not to attribute the warnings to the "Great White Lodge" and try to make out that his information comes from the "holier than thou" rulers of everything (except AMAZING STORIES). Perhaps it is because Mr. Shaver doesn't believe in all this "mystic" business, but prefers to remain on a cold level of logic devoid of all romance, and state only what he believes to be a reasonable possibility. At least it can be demonstrated that his sources do not contradict themselves!

In closing this discussion department for another thirty days, we want to invite the comments of any and all readers on any and all phases of AMAZING STORIES, whether it be the currently interesting Shaver Mystery, or any of the many varied stories we offer for your entertainment and with the hope that in addition they serve to make you think. This magazine is proud of the position it has occupied for twenty years as the harbinger of the future, the forecaster of miracles to come, and the warning voice of tomorrow.—Ed.

THE END

STORIES of the STARS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

This is the story of Altair, a star in the constellation called Aquila

ALTAIR is located in the constellation Aquila. Its magnitude is 0.9; it's right ascension is 19.8; its declination is plus 8.6; it is on the meridian at 8 P. M. on September 19; its radial velocity is minus 33.1.

It is a Class A5 star, and its velocity component of the limb is of the order of 200 kilometers per second, indicating that the star must be very oblate. This is the upper limit at which a star may rotate without flying to pieces.

Aquila means "the eagle" or "the vulture". It is about 14 light years away (Altair, its main star).

Artist Frank R. Paul, whose water-color painting illustrating a scene on a planet circling Altair, appears on our back cover this month, has a vivid imagination, but he has coupled this imagination with a reasonable scientific background for what he has created.

First, he has painted Altair as a giant white sun surrounded by a halo of various colors. These colors are due to the atmosphere of the planet, being composed, as it may well be, of various gases that might be poisonous to human beings.

Next, he has conceived a rugged landscape which combines the features of a lunar crater landscape, rolling hills, and granite masses out of a Disney nightmare. In short, the planet seems to be in a chaotic state.

Inhabiting this weird planet he has pictured three types of living creatures. The first, apparently living on the ground, or under it, much like prairie dogs, is a quadruped with a semi-human appearance, having lizard-like heads and splay feet and hands, probably to aid them in scrambling about their underground burrows. These creatures would seem to have some sort of civilization, since they are clothed, and their burrows are fashioned of some sort of plastic which shows the marks of machining or casting. The second type of life is a giant beetle, heavily armored, and apparently a cross between a beetle and a bee. This second type of life is used falcon-wise to chase and pounce upon the lizard men. The third type of life seems to be a highly intelligent form of quadruped which has mastered gravity and equipped itself with giant aircraft and individual craft in which they sit in magnificence directing their beetle warriors in their attack on the lizard men.

It would seem that these life forms are masters of all they survey, and that the poor lizard men occupy the same position the average man does on our war-mad world.

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STORIES OF THE STARS.... ALTAIR

Altair is a star in the constellation Aquila. It is a giant star, and most likely has a number of planets circling it, some of which are capable of supporting living things. Artist Paul has pictured one of those planets and imagined its inhabitants. (See page 177)

